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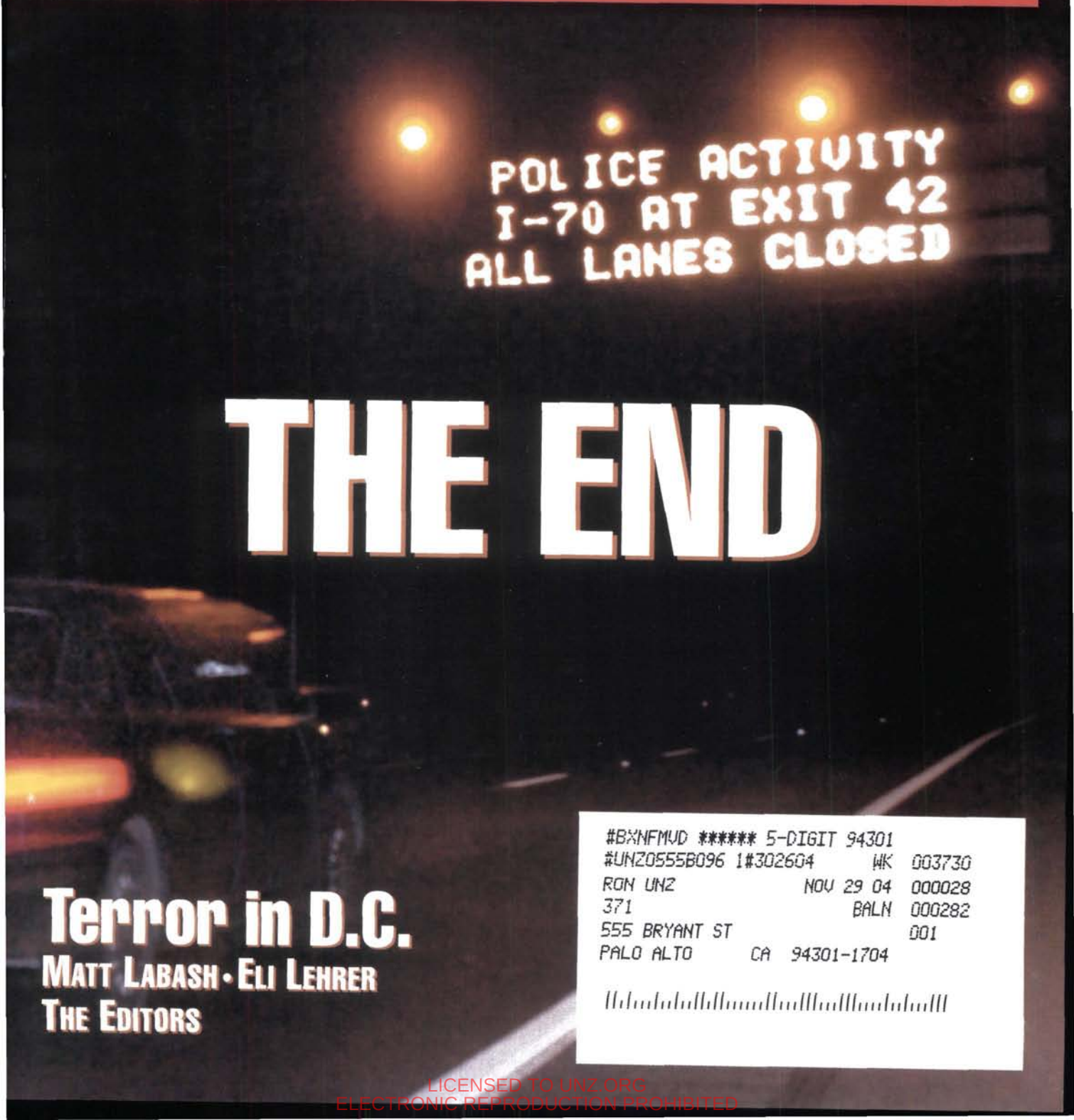

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MATT LABASH • ELI LEHRER
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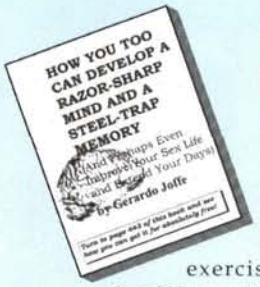

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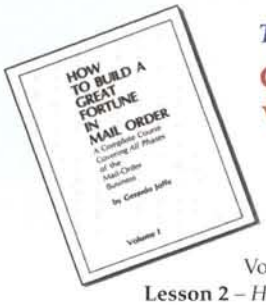

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The Media and the Snipers

Lots of whining last week about the sniper case and the excesses of 24-hour media coverage. Sure. Fine. Okay. No doubt Columbia's journalism school will host 50 panel discussions featuring news directors in orgies of self-flagellation. Bad media! Bad media!

One thing that won't be covered—THE SCRAPBOOK is taking bets—is bias. Specifically, why did journalists focus more on the military background of John Allen Muhammad than on his conversion to Islam?

The *Washington Post* on Thursday carried this headline—"Police Looking for Former Soldier for Questioning in Sniper Case." NPR that same morning used only Muhammad's previous name, John Allen Williams. On Thursday afternoon, websites for each of the major news networks prominently reported Muhammad's status as an Army veteran while ignoring or burying his conversion to radical Islam. MSNBC was typical: "A former soldier and a teenager arrested in connection with the sniper hunt were expected to be arraigned Thursday, as sources told NBC News the evidence against them included a rifle of the same caliber as the gun used in the killings and a car modified to make for easy shooting."

Is the "former soldier" part of Muhammad's personal history relevant? Possibly. More relevant than his conversion to Islam, his reported defense of the September 11 attacks, and his sympathies with al Qaeda? Please.

Perhaps the most egregious example, first noted by weblogger Diane Moon, comes from the *New York Times*. In their October 24 article, *Times* reporters Francis X. Clines and David Johnston claimed that federal officials were interested in talking to the two men about possible involvement in "skinhead militia" groups. (Although it appeared in the "Washington Final" edition of the paper, that report has been dropped from the version of the piece on the *Times* website. It's not in the Nexis version, either.)

While the *New York Times* and the networks were desperately seeking Muhammad's ties to neonazis, in Washington state, the *Bellingham Herald* pursued a different angle. Reporters John Stark, Aubrey Cohen, and Mary Lane Gallagher found the Rev. Al Archer, who directs the Lighthouse Mission, a homeless shelter where Muhammad occasionally stayed. According to the *Herald*, Archer was concerned that Muhammad was a terrorist and called the FBI in October 2001 to alert them. Archer was suspicious in part because Muhammad flew around the country while staying at the homeless shelter. Said Archer: "I felt like he was part of an organization. I felt like he had some connection with terrorists." Archer says he told the FBI that Muhammad has "connections somewhere with somebody who's got money."

Harjeep Singh, who knew Muhammad from the local YMCA, worried about "anti-American statements" and said Muhammad spoke of vague plans for violence. Other people who knew Muhammad say he passed out "pro-Islamic fliers" in Bellingham and seemed more interested in politics and religion after September 11.

Maybe Stark, Cohen, and Gallagher will get invited to the journalism-school discussions, but don't bet on it. ♦

Toujours Vietnam

Anthony Lewis, former liberal stalwart of the *New York Times* op-ed page, has gazed into his crystal ball for the *New York Review of Books*, in a cover piece entitled "Bush and Iraq." As it has been for the last quarter century, Lewis's crystal ball is tuned to the all-Vietnam, all-the-time station.

"As I read [a *Times* profile of Paul Wolfowitz], I kept thinking of one thing: Vietnam. Here, as in Vietnam, the advocates are sure that American power can prevail—and sure that the result will be a happy one. But here, as in Vietnam, so many things could go wrong. Iraq is a large, modern, heavily urbanized country. If we bomb it apart, are we going to be wise enough to put it back together? Have Mr. Wolfowitz and his fellow sunshine warriors calculated the effects of an American war on feelings among Arabs and other Muslims?"

Another Vietnam? The tender feelings of the Arabs? Where have we heard these sorts of things before? Oh yeah, from the pen of Anthony Lewis:

"If all this means what it says—war [with Iraq]—then George Bush is taking his country and the world into a tragedy of appalling dimensions. It would be a war with enormous casualties and with destabilizing effects beyond calculation" (November 23, 1990, *New York Times*).

And again: "A ground attack on Iraqi forces in or around Kuwait could produce ghastly American casualties. The Iraqis are well dug in, and they are experienced in defense tactics. A land assault against their positions could be like Flanders Fields. . . . If U.S. planes attack, there is every reason to fear that Saddam Hussein would strike at Israel, trying to rally Arabs to his cause. . . . Then Israel would retaliate, inevitably and unnecessarily. And the whole political complexion of the gulf crisis would change. Would it be possible to keep the Saudis, the Syrians, and other

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Arabs in the anti-Saddam coalition? To see such dangers is to begin to understand the possible political consequences of war" (December 14, 1990, *New York Times*).

When Anthony Lewis repeats himself, it's farce both times. ♦

Ready, Aim, Fired

Last Friday afternoon, Emory University announced it was accepting the resignation of history professor Michael Bellesiles, the author of the anti-gun history *Arming America*, which won the prestigious 2001 Bancroft prize. The school also released a 40-page report, composed by a committee of three outside scholars who had reviewed Bellesiles's use of evidence in his award-winning book.

The verdict? Bellesiles was at best an incompetent researcher and at worst a dishonest hack. Further proof of this was not needed, but the report ably supplies it anyway.

The committee focused on the personal property records from 1765 to 1860 that Bellesiles used to argue for a much lower incidence of gun ownership than previously believed. They found that Bellesiles had presented "seemingly randomly gathered information" in Vermont as a complete account of all the guns owned there and that he was guilty of imprecision and "exaggeration" with respect to Providence, Rhode Island, records. But that was just for starters.

Although the committee could not actually prove that Bellesiles "invented" nonexistent records from San Francisco, as some critics have suggested, they found that his account of when and where he examined those records does not hold up at all.

As damning as anything, the report includes an admission by Bellesiles that he had intentionally excluded evidence that would have increased the number of guns he found for the years 1774-1776. "Every aspect of the work in the probate records is deeply flawed," the committee reports.

No clearer, more mainstream, more respectable proof could be required for the conclusion that Bellesiles deserved all the exposés his work provoked.

Not that Bellesiles is willing to admit defeat. In his letter of resignation (also posted on Emory University's website), the historian calls the controversy just "a scholarly disagreement." He says he'll continue his "research" into guns while he works on his next book, though he "cannot continue to teach in what I feel is a hostile environment."

THE SCRAPBOOK wonders who else will remain defiant with the release of this report. Bellesiles's friendly *New York Times* reviewer Garry Wills? How about Columbia University, which gave Bellesiles the once-prestigious Bancroft prize? And then there's the *Nation*, which showed up late to the party only a couple of weeks ago to circulate pro-Bellesiles spin in a completely credulous article by Jon Wiener, a historian from the University of California at Irvine. Oops. ♦

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Casual

Children of a Lesser Godfather

There was a genuine Kodak moment last week in Game 3 of the World Series. Baseball great Willie Mays threw out the opening pitch to Barry Bonds. What made it so special was that Mays is Bonds's godfather. It made me feel warm and fuzzy inside, seeing them play catch together and afterwards fondly embrace. It made me feel hopeful that one day I, too, can be as good a godfather as Willie Mays and see my godchild go on to do great things.

Also last week, my sister asked me if I wanted to go in on a gift certificate for Sam, whose birthday had already passed. "Sam? Who's he?" I asked. "*She* is your godchild," snipped my sister, disappointed. I, however, was mainly annoyed at the discovery of this apparently forgotten godchild. "Another one?" was my spontaneous reply.

My sister called me heartless and a few other things. It was then that it began to dawn on me that I had become a deadbeat godfather. This is a name rarely spoken aloud but one that applies to millions of adults and affects millions of children—children who grow up hearing about some mythical godparent and praying that this person will send them a gift on their birthday or on Christmas. But each year the prayer goes unanswered. Soon the children forget about godparents altogether—that is, until as grownups they are asked to be godparents themselves.

This happened to me eight years ago when my cousin had her first child. She asked me to be godfather, and, deeply moved by this Corleonean gesture, I readily accepted. Indeed, *The Godfather* affected my view of the honor, lending it an air of dark and mysterious power. I'd always wanted to drop lines like, "I've decided to be godfather to Connie's baby. And then I'll meet with Barzini."

My mother, on the other hand, was wary: "I would think carefully before accepting." She reminded me of the spiritual responsibilities, while my father mentioned the financial aspect. "When they get older, they'll be asking for money," he warned. Apparently, whenever my father goes home to the Philippines, he is hit up for cash by dozens of relatives all claiming to be his godchildren.

But not me. I would be a better godfather than my old man—the Engelbert Humperdinck of deadbeat godfathers. (Humperdinck once joked that, in order to accommodate all his children, he had to celebrate Father's Day at the Rose Bowl.) Instead, I would look to role models like my friend Buck, who became godfather to his frat brother's son while they were still in college. It was always awe-inspiring to hear him say he couldn't go out because of his godson's birthday. Or his first communion. Or his bar mitzvah. (There are those who suspect this godson is just an excuse—no one has ever actually met the boy.)

Still, I couldn't have been prouder to attend my first godchild's christening. In the process I learned there was a second godfather—my cousin's brother-in-law. This only made me more determined to be the best godfather ever, unfailingly remembering birthdays and other holidays.

I haven't seen the kid in six years now. Not that this is all my fault. When my cousin, who lives in Phoenix, had her second child, she again asked if I would be godfather. Then the same thing happened with her third—Samantha. How does one say no?

So now my sister reminds me about these children's birthdays, Christmas, Easter, Halloween, and Thanksgiving. And I am left wondering how I got myself into this mess in the first place. The answer is quite clear: Statistics will one day show that deadbeat godfathers, much like lousy absentee real fathers, are part of a vicious cycle. More than likely, the deadbeat godfather was once the victim of a deadbeat himself. This certainly applies to me. I have no recollection of my own godfather, though he appears in the pictures from my baptism. No cards or gifts. I wouldn't recognize him if I passed him on the street. Last I heard, he was somewhere in Texas.

It's a good thing there aren't any laws against deadbeat godfathers. I'd be the first one in jail, owing thousands of dollars in back-payments for godchild support. Though I daresay I wouldn't be alone.

There ought to be a counseling center for deadbeat godfathers like me, and ways to treat our disability and break this terrible cycle. Maybe after spending some time in a good-godparenting clinic, I would make an earnest effort to find out when exactly my godchildren's birthdays are, fly out for the parties, and forever be a wondrous part of their lives. It would also help if at least one of these children were named Barry Bonds.

Victorino Matus

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JFK Doppelgängers

Peter Schweizer's "The Cuban Missile Crisis, Reconsidered" (Oct. 21) was most welcome. It's good to know that liberal revisionism isn't the only game in town where JFK is concerned. However, in support of Schweizer's factual report, I believe two other points should be made.

For weeks before the U-2 photo, Senator Frank Keating of New York had been receiving from his Cuban contacts hard information on Soviet construction of missile sites in Cuba. These reports were coming in almost daily, and they were immediately passed on to the Kennedy White House. There, they were just as quickly waved off unacknowledged. The U-2 picture opened not only the eyes of the American public, but those of President Kennedy as well.

Even then, the president hedged in his implementation of the quarantine. He enlisted John Scali, an ABC News reporter, as an intermediary with Khrushchev. He wanted to know in advance that the Soviets would turn their ships around. Only with the assurance provided by Scali was the quarantine put into effect.

While this information was available to the public at the time, it has since been all but lost as liberal historians and movie makers have simply omitted it from their accounts of the matter.

One other small point: Frank Keating was rewarded with the loss of his Senate seat—to Robert F. Kennedy.

Jack Lehner Jr.
Stow, OH

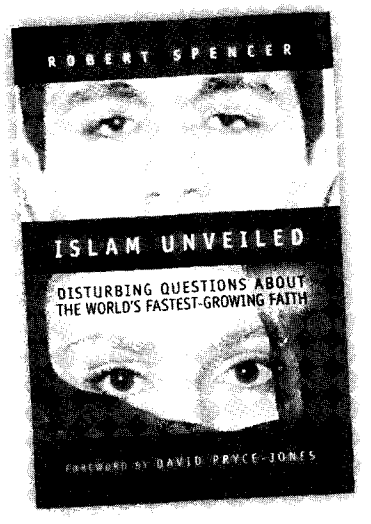
The caption accompanying the photo of a Soviet missile base in Peter Schweizer's "The Cuban Missile Crisis, Reconsidered" mistakenly identifies the briefer in the photograph as John F. Kennedy. The briefer was actually an intelligence officer from the Defense Intelligence Agency, John T. Hughes, who was also my father. He was then a 34-year-old U-2 photo interpreter who had briefed the Joint Chiefs, the Secretary of Defense, and JFK throughout the crisis. The photograph was taken February 6, 1963, several months after the crisis had eased, during a nationally televised briefing. The briefing documented the Soviet buildup of offensive nuclear weapons in Cuba and their subsequent dismantlement and withdrawal. The secretary of defense, Robert McNamara, introduced the briefing, and my father used slides made from aerial surveillance photographs to explain how the U.S. government had monitored Soviet military activity in Cuba.

The slide shown in the Schweizer article photo was taken from reconnaissance imagery collected during the U-2 mission flown on October 14, 1962, that uncovered the Soviet deployment of medium-range ballistic missiles to Cuba.

Michael J. Hughes
Reston, VA

Market For Terror?

James D. Miller's "Let Lawyers Help Fight Terror" (Oct. 21) takes all of



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three-quarters of a page to explore the nuances of his idea that "America should use the magic of the marketplace to keep al Qaeda operatives off her shore. To utilize the market, schools will need to be held civilly liable for terrorist acts committed by their students. Schools would have to buy insurance to protect against this new liability, and the insurance companies would then investigate the potential student-immigrants."

The main problem with his suggestion is that, far from being an efficient market system, our civil justice system is a large, fragmented collection of inefficient government bureaucracies. Our tort law system is not capable of properly pricing the risk that a school's immigrant students would commit terrorist acts. It therefore follows that insurance premiums, which would have to reflect the risks of adverse civil judgments, could not properly price the risk that students would commit terrorist acts.

Of course, there are many other objections to Miller's idea. For example: Could schools be held liable without fault? Would they also be liable for terrorist acts committed by their non-immigrant students? What about other crimes? Who would be entitled to sue the schools? How would schools share responsibility with other institutions in students' lives?

But dealing with all those questions is unnecessary—Professor Miller's argument fails on its own narrow grounds, because his market solution would not actually "utilize the market" by any stretch of the imagination.

STEVE WINEBERG
Exeter, NH

JULIA, OPRAH, AND HILLARY

AS A PROFESSOR who was rather vocal in my critique of the intrusion of celebrity culture onto Wellesley's campus during the filming of *Mona Lisa Smile*, I must take issue with some of the characterizations of the criticisms put forward by my friend and colleague Jonathan B. Imber in his article "Julia Does Wellesley: Hollywood Meets Higher Education" (Oct. 28).

To be sure, there was a sanctimonious ring about some of the criticisms, but the sanctimony was a result of the concern among some of us about the increasing intrusion of celebrity culture into institutions of higher education. Most of us did not feel at all, as Professor Imber characterizes it, that the campus was being "ravished."

Speaking for myself, I simply wished to raise some criticisms in order to challenge the idea that being the object of a 1950s Hollywood fantasy or being in the presence of Julia Roberts are unquestionably good things. In my 14 years at Wellesley, I have seen Oprah Winfrey celebrated as a woman of intellectual power, Hillary Clinton celebrated as a role model for young women, and, during the recent filming of *Mona Lisa Smile*, Julia Roberts celebrated as an icon of beauty with the power to turn the campus agog. Perhaps Professor Imber is correct in assuming that our students have the ability to distinguish between fact and fantasy. But the whole lemming-like attraction to the event, led, by the way, by many members of the faculty, caused me to wonder whether this is, indeed, the case.

As a visiting professor at Brandeis University last year, I discovered, much to my dismay, that many of the students in one of my classes did not know who Heinrich Himmler was. And over the years at Wellesley, I've discovered that many of my students don't know what the "gulag" was. And this from the best and the brightest.

So, call me old-fashioned, but I do wish that those kinds of things were as well known among students as Julia Roberts. We teachers have much work to do, and the celebrity culture doesn't always help us in our task.

THOMAS CUSHMAN
Professor of Sociology
Wellesley College
Wellesley, MA

COMPASSIONATE CONS

I'D LIKE TO THANK AND CONGRATULATE Eli Lehrer for bringing up one of the country's most difficult topics in "Crime After Punishment," prison rape (Oct. 21). As Frank Wolf put it, this is "the perfect compassionate conservative issue."

Skeptical readers who hesitate to feel any sympathy for prison rape victims should remember that while one might be sentenced to ten years of prison time, one is never sentenced to "ten years of being ferociously beaten and raped by other offenders while guards look the other way." I even recently read about an inmate who was allegedly raped repeatedly and contracted HIV from these attacks.

Lehrer should be careful, however, about the issue of "accountability" when it comes to prison staff. Correctional officers' unions have far more justifiable concerns than the National Education Association or the Teamsters: A prison guard, after all, works with the constant risk of having his throat cut by a sharpened toothbrush. If prison guards are tacitly allowing rapes to continue, it may be a result of dangerously scarce staffing and poor conditions (this from a conservative Republican).

I hope to read more about criminal justice issues in the future from THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

MATTHEW CLAVEL
New York, NY

BYRDS OF A FEATHER

THANK YOU for a wonderfully funny parody of the Senate's senior windbag and sole surviving Klansman, Robert Byrd (Oct. 21).

I was reminded of the story of the young politician who asked Byrd's advice on public speaking. "Keep it short," Byrd said. "You'll start to lose your audience if you go much past seven hours."

The man is surely a legend in his own mind.

JOHN W. MATTHEWS
Chapel Hill, NC

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the weekly Standard

Yes, the Sniper Was a Terrorist

An interesting thing happened in Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia last Thursday, as the nation woke up to the news that two people thought to be responsible for the Washington area's recent wave of sniper murders had finally been arrested.

Out "there," beyond the Beltway, print reporters scrambled to find out anything and everything they could about the suspects, 41-year-old John Allen Muhammad and 17-year-old John Lee Malvo. And, meantime, cable talk-show bookers—to whom the wait for fully established fact is a perpetual, intolerable annoyance—treated the world to yet another round of "retired FBI profilers" and other such witch doctors, the better to explain what might have motivated the murders. Guesswork question number one, apparently: Was it terrorism, or something more "mundane"?

Here at home, though, along the zigzaggy line from Ashland, Virginia, to Bowie, Maryland, where we're still scrubbing gore from our shopping center sidewalks—and still praying for two half-eviscerated victims who remain hospitalized in critical condition, one of them a 13-year-old boy—the major concern lies, interestingly, elsewhere. Nearest the crime scenes, it turns out, few of us, least of all those criminal justice system authorities who've lived the sniper horror most immediately and intensely these past three weeks, give a rat's patootie *why* the shooters shot. The only relief we feel is that they aren't shooting anymore. And the only question we're asking ourselves is: What's the fastest, best guaranteed process by which to execute these two bastards?

Last Friday's *Washington Post* reported this issue with bracing candor, and in appropriately expansive detail: a 25-paragraph story, "Chances of Death Penalty Could Decide Trial Venue," spread across all six columns of an inside page. "Prosecutors from Maryland, Virginia and the federal government were maneuvering yesterday for the first chance to try the sniper shootings case," *Post* correspondents Craig Timberg and Katherine Shaver explained, "with a high-level debate centering on which venue has the best chance of carrying out the death penalty."

The use of a firearm during commission of a federal crime—like a $10 million extortion plot—is itself a capital offense under Title 18 of the U.S. Code, so John Ashcroft's Justice Department is considering whether to exercise supervening authority over any trial. Prosecutors in Virginia, where the sniper attacks killed three and wounded two others, want the case for themselves, however, and they are arguing for jurisdiction by explicit appeal to the Commonwealth's reputation for unforgiving juries—and its resulting "experience" with the death penalty: Virginia has executed 86 prisoners since 1976, more, per capita, than any other state in the country. Maryland, the *Post* notes by contrast, has shown a "historic reluctance to carry out executions"; there've been only three of them over the past 26 years, none since 1998, and an across-the-board moratorium on the death penalty, imposed by outgoing governor Parris Glendening, is technically still in place. Nevertheless, Maryland elected officials of both parties adamantly insist that *they* want to—and can, and will—put John Allen Muhammad to death. Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, the Democratic nominee in next week's gubernatorial election, calls lethal injection for the alleged sniper an absolute "no brainer."

This seems to us an altogether unsurprising, but nevertheless significant, phenomenon—and not simply, or even primarily, for what it might suggest about capital punishment, a vastly complicated issue on which various editors of this magazine have widely divergent views. We are struck, instead, by the extent to which responsible adult Americans generally, when suddenly confronted close at hand with a horrifying campaign of systematic violence conducted against random civilians, instinctively reject all those luxuries of dispassionate intellectual analysis that we habitually indulge in when *other* people are doing the dying—someplace far, far away.

Sure, from the refrigerated, plywood studios of the "CNN Center in Atlanta," 550 safe miles to the south, it is as nothing to fill air time with casual speculation about "why," last Tuesday in Aspen Hill, Maryland, John Allen Muhammad might have felt it necessary to disembowel 35-year-old bus driver Conrad Johnson with a Bushmaster XM-15 rifle. Just as it was much too easy, much too soon

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after September 11, 2001, for far too many otherwise intelligent Americans to start pulling their oh-so-serious-and-responsible chins over Very Important Questions about the "sources" of anti-American rage in the Islamic Middle East. But if you live within driving distance of Conrad Johnson's widow and two orphaned boys, if the yellow police tape still floats in the wind at your Washington-area neighborhood strip mall, and if, for that matter, the body of your husband or daughter has been reduced to so much microscopic Trade Center dust in Staten Island's Fresh Kills landfill—well, then you do not care, you *cannot* care, what "motivated" the assassin. And none of the rest of us should waste much time caring about it, either. Especially if the assassin remains at large.

Once more, then: Is "terrorism" the proper name for such a crime? So as to distinguish it from wholly "senseless" murders? And, too, from those more familiar and "ordinary" murders of passion and greed that have plagued the world since time began? In some essential respect, we think, the question is frivolous—grotesque, even. Because the only genuinely humane, immediate response to atrocities like the Washington sniper attacks and Mohamed Atta's airline hijackings—and the necessary formal response of an organized civil society—is collective fury. Along with a controlled but ferocious determination to incapacitate and crush the perpetrators as quickly as possible. Deep-think analysis can and must wait.

In any case, of *course* it's "terrorism." A man takes aim at the torso of an unsuspecting stranger, a target who has walked into his telescopic sight by purest circumstance, and coolly pulls the trigger. Then he packs up, walks away, and does it again and again and again, until he is caught. What else can we call this but "terrorism," whether or not there pretends to be some "political" cause at its root? The act itself, not whatever deranged and vicious pseudo-logic might reside in the actor's head, determines its character. And the character of terrorism, in turn, determines—sharply delimits—what effective means we have available to protect ourselves from it. Killing the terrorist is one such means, and instinct tells us there aren't very many others. Kathleen Kennedy Townsend is surely onto something when she calls this conclusion a "no brainer."

And yet: How commonly and cavalierly we retreat deep inside our brains, and convene our seminars, and issue our solemn State Department démarches, and demand superhuman, practically self-lacerating restraint from non-American victims of . . . perfectly equivalent barbarity. In the United States, John Allen Muhammad is a show-stopper, transfixing in his evil, a nationwide obsession precisely because his crimes are so unusual. But there are parts of the world where such crimes are routine. Israel, most obviously, is beset by innumerable men like Muhammad; suicide bombings make for more spectacular television, so that is all we ever see, but random Israeli civilians, hundreds of them over the years, are gunned down by Palestinian snipers like clockwork. On yet another continent, even as this sentence is written, Chechen "rebels" are holding hundreds of ordinary Russians captive in a Moscow theater, have already murdered at least one of them, and are threatening to blow the place up on top of all the rest unless Vladimir Putin's government surrenders to a series of "nationalist" demands.

This stuff, and just because it marches under a counterfeit flag of legitimate politics, many of us prefer to fancy a "cycle of violence." And many of us are pleased to condemn it, and whatever muscular reaction its victims can muster in self-defense, as if both were unnatural and both a sin. But they are not the same animal, and it is cruel and stupid to say they are. A terrorist is a terrorist is a terrorist, no matter what purports to be his motivation. For the moment, having met John Allen Muhammad, Washington, D.C., seems to appreciate this point. One hopes the lesson sticks. It has global application.

—David Tell, for the Editors

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All Blather, All the Time

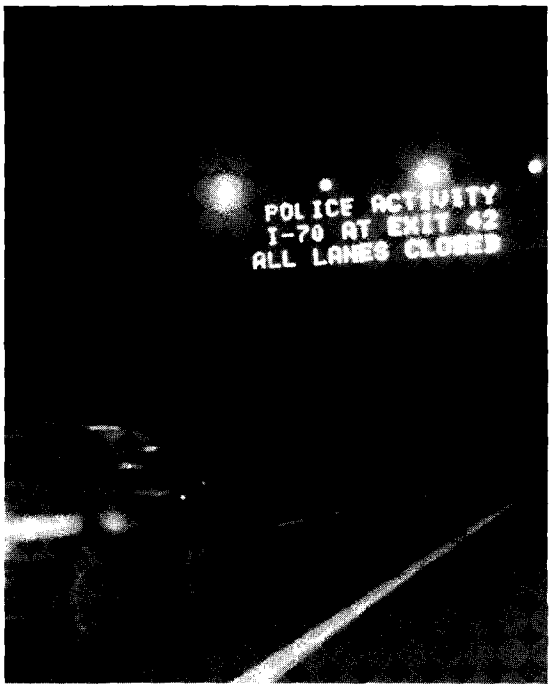
Cable TV outdoes itself in its "analysis" of the sniper story. BY MATT LABASH

SOMERSET MAUGHAM once said, "There is only one thing about which I am certain, and that is that there is very little about which one can be certain." But that's easy for Somerset Maugham to say. He never had to go on *Connie Chung Tonight* to play an expert on the Beltway Sniper.

For three weeks straight, until John Allen Muhammad and his sidekick John Lee Malvo were arrested on October 24, we listened to an endless cacophony of speculation, fabrication, and wild conjecture. In lapel mikes and pancake makeup, they went at it like a roomful of drunks playing darts blindfolded—the criminologists and journalists, the shrinks and psychological profilers, of whom those last have proven to be the phrenologists of the criminal science world.

Even at this early stage, with the bare minimum known about the two suspects, it seems the "experts" were wrong in nearly every respect: There was no lone shooter who drove a white van and resembled some ticked-off Caucasian amalgam of Charles Manson and Drew Carey. Prior to the arrest, columnist Michelle Malkin was nearly alone in raising a red flag on the white-guy theory, taking to task people like Brian Levin of the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism, who confidently assumed that the killer was "kind of a wallpaper white male . . . who's getting back at society."

Likewise, the fine people of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, always good for laughs, wrongly insisted that the sniper couldn't be a Muslim. Writing "I am God," they said, as the sniper did on the tarot card, would be an "unforgivable sin in Islam." Islamic devotees committing unforgivable sins. Imagine that.



Some of the speculative gaffes have been major, such as Montgomery County Police Chief Charles Moose's insisting that our children were "safe" at school just a few days before a 13-year-old was gunned down at his. But most of the claims have been small cheats. While we used to have to wait years for an imaginative artist to come around and novelize a true-crime scene (as in Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood*), chat-show regulars now do the same every night of the week. Using dramatic legerdemain, factual embroidery, even the killer's own unknowable interior monologues—whatever it takes—these analysts always appear to be 100 percent certain.

Take the oft-repeated, much-abused phrase "what the sniper wants." We know from police that the sniper wanted to be wired millions in cash. But he wanted so much more, say the experts. He wanted to be a "big-shot celebrity, . . . to feel powerful, but not necessarily by taking a life," Northeastern criminologist Jack Levin said of the man who took 10 lives. "He wants to be a cool, stealthy, feared person—but he's not," said Brent Turvey, author of *Criminal Profiling*, as if the sniper had worn nerdy corduroys when they'd gone out partying together. Dr. Bob Gordon of the Wilmington Institute Network of Trial Science told CNN that the man who managed to avoid some of the most comprehensive dragnets in local law enforcement history "wants to be caught because he has a death wish." (When host Miles O'Brien halted him, saying, "That sounds like a bit of speculation," Gordon informed him it was "clinical speculation." "All right," said O'Brien, "clinical speculation, then. That's an interesting term.")

Part of this rampant speculation, clinical or otherwise, is prompted by television hosts, forced to fill endless air time with almost no facts being imparted by those who are actually in possession of them. With her misfiring cylinders and stun-gun delivery, Connie Chung is usually responsible for the most painful hour of television even during more peaceful times. But during the sniper saga, she reached new lows, asking one guest if the sniper was "getting close to being caught," and another if the sniper was ready to "cease and desist." "I don't know,

Matt Labash is senior writer at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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Connie. I'll ask him when we carpool home in the white van," I was hoping the guest would reply.

But for the most part, Chung and her ilk had to offer no such encouragement, since the endless parade of profilers were more than happy to offer suppositions as gospel. In addition to somehow knowing that the sniper enjoys violent video games and hunting "to the point of addiction," profiler John Kelly told the *Boston Herald* that the sniper is a sensitive chap. "I think he became highly insulted when the police said they got a garbled message and wanted him to call back," said Kelly.

Though he says he detests profilers, former New York police detective and current publicity tapeworm Bo Dietl established, in his multitudinous print and broadcast appearances, that the sniper is a "damned psychopathic coward" who is "not a macho person." He couldn't be a Muslim fundamentalist because he would have never written "I am God," since his God would be Allah. Likewise, after launching into a bizarre theory of how the killers were fans of a violent sniper video game, he suggested they were "loser-type people," "possibly 17-18-19-20-year-old kids that are not in the mainstream of other kids." Maybe that's because the "kid" who's believed to be the shooter is actually 41 years old.

Dietl is hardly alone in stepping out on a ledge. *New York Post* columnist Steve Dunleavy was so convinced the sniper was part of a foreign-born terrorist cell that he wrote, "If, when the shooter is caught, he is not a foreigner, I will bare my derriere in Macy's window." (I think I speak for the journalism world when I say no one wants to collect on that bet.) Likewise, *New York* magazine's media critic, Michael Wolff, who went on the air to bemoan the wall-to-wallness and look-at-me-ism of the sniper coverage, predicted the sniper was "rushing home to watch all of this on television." While we now know it might have been difficult for the sniper to get his 1990 Chevrolet Caprice wired for cable (he was supposedly living out of his car), Wolff, repelled by all the media coverage, managed to make the same point on CNN, Fox, and MSNBC.

If there was one presence, however, that was more nauseatingly ubiquitous than all the others, it had to be former FBI profiler Clint Van Zandt's. In appearances too numerous to catalog, he somehow claimed to know that the sniper might have "a type of employment that doesn't require him . . . to be in an office" (it's called "unemployment"). Additionally, he is a "psychopath," but a "cool" and "calculating" one. Van Zandt also appears to have gotten into the sniper's medicine cabinet, saying that killing is his "emotional heroin" and "psychological Viagra." His turnoffs include killing people on weekends (until he did). His turn-ons include "shooting melons and watching them explode."

And how does Van Zandt know all this? Well, he doesn't. But with so many respectable criminology types playing psychic, it's hardly surprising that a few psychics have tried to play criminologist. Before the suspects were arrested, Kevin Carlyon, high priest of British White Witches, sent the FBI his "psychic profile" of the sniper. Perhaps best known for causing a ruckus by crying out that broomsticks in the Harry Potter movie were being flown the wrong way, Carlyon confidently predicted that the sniper would stop killing after his 13th attack on Halloween, after which he'd commit suicide. Sadly, he was closer to being correct than many of the psychological profilers.

Then there's Jacqueline Stallone, mother of Sylvester Stallone, who is, as her promotional materials modestly put it, "America's most celebrated psychic and astrologer." When I reach her at her home, she seems to pick up the phone before the first ring. Knowing that she is a live one (she boasts of practicing the ancient art of "rumpology" in which she tells your future by looking at a print of your fanny), I call to give her the business about botching her sniper prediction. Several days earlier, she told *MSNBC.com*'s Jeannette Walls that the sniper would be a "light-haired person in his 20s or 30s." By the time I reach her, she has already heard the bad news that the suspected shooter is a black man in his 40s.

But she has some bad news of her own. John Allen Muhammad and John Lee Malvo are not the snipers. "I don't see black men involved at all," she says. "I see white, and I only see one. He's about 5'11". Normal weight. Sort of an all-American collegiate looking guy. Better looking than the guy next door, because most of them are ugly. And he likes blue."

Playing along, I ask if she can clue me in on any more of his personal habits. "What does he eat?" I ask. I am taken aback by her answer. For she utters six words that I haven't heard any "expert" speak since this whole business began. "Oh, c'mon," she says. "I have no idea." ♦

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Profiles in Confusion

It might be entertaining, but profiling doesn't solve crimes. BY ELI LEHRER

A MYSTERIOUS PHONE CALL, a fingerprint, a composite sketch, and spent ammunition from an unsolved Alabama killing finally led the police to sniper suspects John Allen Muhammad and John Lee Malvo. In the end, all the scientific-sounding speculation offered by the bevy of professional profilers who had been pronouncing in the media for weeks had nothing to do with the alleged snipers' capture.

The profilers' most confident assertions turned out to be wrong: Nearly every profiler who appeared on TV guessed that a white male was doing the shooting, since nearly all famous serial killers have been men of European descent. But both Muhammad and Malvo are black. Candace DeLong, a California-based FBI veteran and frequent cable TV guest, swore that the sniper was "less than 25 years old" and worked alone. But Muhammad is 41 and had a partner.

Often the television sages portentously stated the obvious. Former FBI profiler Clint Van Zandt told *Time* magazine that the sniper was "toying with the police" and "using the media for information." Collectively, profilers covered all the bases. Northeastern University professor Jack Levin told the Toronto *Globe and Mail* that the killer was emotionless, while security consultant Robert Ressler insisted that he shot people for thrills. "My predictions were not that close," confessed Levin when the *New York Times* asked him for a self-assessment. With so many guesses flying around, however, a few turned out to be right. Former New York City homicide detective Bo Dietl guessed that "two skinny kids" were doing the shooting and claimed victory when the police apprehended two men. (Muhammad, of course, is hardly a kid.)

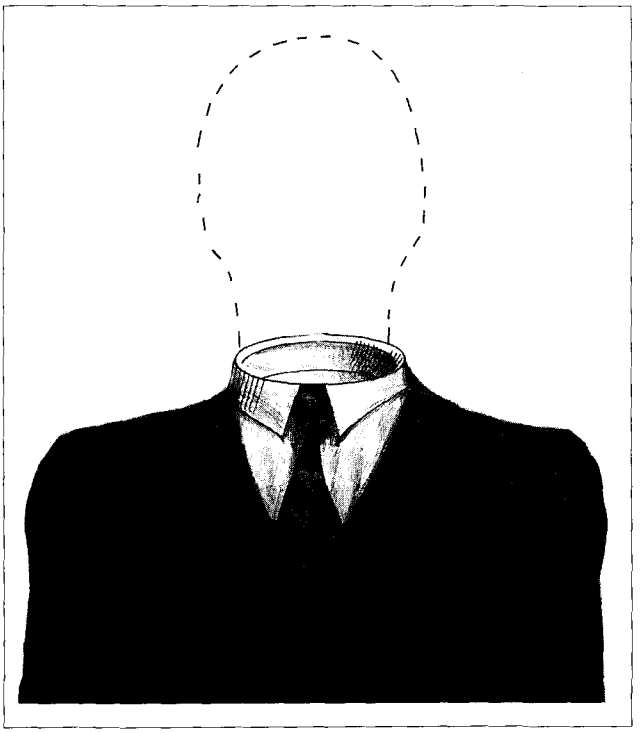

Illustration by Earl Keleny

The media's respect for a dubious branch of psychological science seems mostly to reflect the fascination with "profiling" of the FBI. After psychologist James Brussel provided a profile that helped the Bureau catch a serial bomber in the late 1950s, longtime Bureau head J. Edgar Hoover became obsessed with reading criminals' minds. (Hoover also had great enthusiasm for the iffy science of lie detectors.) The FBI has had a full-scale profiling unit since the early 1970s, despite the fact that few peer-reviewed studies have found any merit in profiling, and most other police agencies have ignored the technique. Outside of the federal government, fewer than 50 people work full-time as profilers.

Indeed, for all the media hype, it's hard to find a single police chief who calls psychological profiling helpful. "I suppose it's useful in a very, very limited sense," says former New York City police commissioner Patrick V. Murphy, who seems to have held every important job in policing. "You might develop a few leads." But profilers, Murphy argues, are only one step more respectable than the psychics and tarot card readers police have been known to call on when truly desperate for leads.

Famed stage magician and pseudo-science debunker James Randi argues psychological profiling is little better than a stage act, a variant of the "cold reading" that performers like John Edward use to "commune with the dead" and "read minds" in front of an audience. Cold reading involves making a large number of vague guesses and asking spectators to provide information. Many profilers work much the same way: They make very broad guesses and then refine them as hard evidence comes in.

Many psychological profiles I've seen read a lot like Edward's stage patter. They are filled with catchall weasel phrases like "I would believe the suspect to be . . . " When attempting to profile the Atlanta Olympic Park bomber back in 1996,

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profilers had it every which way. An AP story reported that the experts had concluded the bomber "may not have worked alone" or, alternatively, "may have been a loner." Other profiles simply state what is in plain view for all to see. Immediately after Unabomber Theodore Kaczynski released a turgid academic-style manifesto, FBI profilers discovered that he was "familiar with university life." When he made attacks near Chicago, the FBI deduced that he knew the area. By the time his family turned him in, the FBI's crack profilers had developed a rather accurate profile of the Unabomber—and anybody with a pulse could have done the same.

Of course there are times when theories about offenders' psychological makeup can help police at the margins. Seasoned detectives and patrol officers can follow lucky hunches, make good guesses, and sometimes even develop psychological clues that a narrower reliance on physical evidence and eyewitness testimony would have missed. But conjecture rarely if ever provides enough information to catch a suspect. Known characteristics like dress, manner, and behavior tell police officers far more.

In fact, honest profilers admit they hardly practice a science. "There's a method and a technique to it, but a lot of it is art," says Bob King, a profiler in Utah who frequently appears on Court TV. "It's not voodoo witch magic," he says, "and it's not a panacea." King describes his goals modestly: "A profile is just a best, educated guess, and that's all it is." King says that the profiling course he teaches around the country is designed simply to convey the wisdom and common sense that veteran cops eventually develop anyway. King trains officers to look at victims as well as offenders, search for patterns, and carefully examine the details of a crime.

Even within the FBI—by far the leading proponent of psychological profiling—the notion that this is a "science" has become the butt of jokes. What began in the 1970s as the Bureau's Behavioral Sciences Unit soon was widely known as the "Bull S—t Unit." Eventually its name was changed to the staid Investigative Support Unit.

The underlying problem is that psychological profiling makes wild guesses from terribly small amounts of information. The most "accurate" profiles contain so little new information that they're worthless for investigative purposes. The more precise a profile, the more likely it is to be wrong and so to mislead police. That's why the best police officers rely instead on community contacts, physical evidence, surveillance, tips from citizens, and street smarts—just the techniques that led to the capture of Muhammad and Malvo. ♦

A Choice, Not an Echo

A Republican Senate would make a real difference. BY FRED BARNES

A FEW YEARS AGO, three senators chatted amiably on the floor of the Senate about their desks. By long tradition, members have carved something in the wood, so a senator who sits there decades later will know who'd used the desk before. The first senator said his desk had once been Daniel Webster's. Webster had etched, "Liberty and Union, now and forever." Not to be outdone, the second senator said Henry Clay had used his desk to record his most famous line, "I'd rather be right than president." Finally, the third senator, chuckling, said his desk had belonged to Gary Hart. On it was inscribed, "For a good time, call 224——."

Why mention this apocryphal story? Note the chumminess, the civility, the seeming air of trust on the Senate floor. Such a mood—which, by the way, the late Sen. Paul Wellstone sought to promote—is not the most important aspect of Senate life. But it is essential if senators are to return to the work of making deals, passing bills, and, as often as possible, aiding the president. True, comity is not always possible, given ideological differences between parties. But except for fleeting episodes like the few weeks after September 11, it is never possible with Majority Leader Tom Daschle in charge of the Senate. And that would change if Republicans were to gain Senate control in the November 5 midterm election.

Not that a raft of conservative legislation would swiftly be enacted were Republican Trent Lott to supplant Daschle as majority leader. But a handful of critical bills (involving the budget, energy, homeland security, making tax cuts permanent) probably would pass, and many of President Bush's impressive—and conservative—judicial nominees would be confirmed. Also, conservative measures passed by the House but shunted aside by Daschle (cloning and partial-birth abortion bans, the faith-based initiative) would at least come up for a vote. And after compromises were reached, so would a prescription drug benefit, which is not dear to the hearts of conservatives, but whose passage is inevitable given the way medical care is now dispensed in America.

Lott and Daschle have fundamen-

Fred Barnes is executive editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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tally different visions of how a Senate majority leader should operate. Lott believes there's an obligation to pass legislation, shaped to the liking of Republicans and conservatives wherever possible. When the president belongs to the other party, that obligation still holds. Thus Lott found common ground with President Clinton on the two most important domestic issues of the 1990s, welfare reform and a balanced budget agreement. Daschle's take is strikingly at odds with Lott's. He is a hyper-partisan who deeply distrusts Bush and the conservatives who influence him, especially White House adviser Karl Rove. Unless Democratic interest groups such as trial lawyers, unions, minorities, and feminists go along, Daschle rarely is willing to compromise.

Sometimes Daschle unwittingly obstructs to the disadvantage of Democrats. A reasonable compromise with Bush and Republicans on a prescription drug benefit has been available for months, but Daschle has balked because the liberal segment of the senior citizens' lobby objects and Democrats want to campaign on the issue. In fact, if the bill passed, the elderly would get everything they want over time. A limited drug program would gradually morph into a universal benefit, if only because the elderly and everyone else sees doctors less these days and takes prescription medicines more. Should a bill pass now, Democrats would get credit. But Daschle seems to begrudge Bush a signing ceremony at the White House.

On creating a homeland security department, Daschle risks political trouble in the election campaign to serve the narrow interest of federal workers' unions. Bush wants a bill that gives him the same flexibility in switching workers from job to job that he has with employees of other Cabinet agencies. Democrats are champions of so-called workers' rights. Three senators—Democrats John Breaux and Ben Nelson and Republican Lincoln Chafee—devised a compromise, only to have it blocked by Daschle. Nor would Daschle allow a vote on whether to attach the flexibility Bush wants to the Democratic bill that has emerged as the chief legislative vehicle for homeland security. Too many Democrats, especially those running this year, would have to vote with the president. The result: no bill at all.

Then there's the partisan fiasco over judges. Yes, Republicans prevented some liberal Clinton nominees from getting a full hearing and a vote. But fewer than Daschle and Judiciary Committee chairman Patrick Leahy are blocking now, and mostly in the dying days of Clinton's presidency. Leahy has allowed some committee votes on nominees opposed by the liberal lobby. And as majority leader, Daschle could have brought those who lost in committee to the Senate floor. He's refused, even spurning a personal plea by Lott to have the nomination of his friend Charles Pickering considered by the full Senate. More recently, Leahy has reneged on a personal promise to Sen. Strom Thurmond to bring up the nomination of Dennis Shedd, a conservative rated "well-qualified" by the American Bar Association. Why? Because Shedd actually has enough support to be approved by the committee.

Daschle has been heavy-handed in squashing compromises worked out in Senate committees, notably ones with potential majority support. He rewrote the farm bill, which Bush ultimately signed but shouldn't have. He blocked a bipartisan deal on terrorism insurance opposed by trial lawyers. He refused to allow the finance committee to draft prescription drug legislation, fearing a compromise version would emerge, and instead sent his own bill to the floor. But his most egregious act was to pull energy legislation from the energy committee when it was on the brink of approving oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge as part of a bipartisan bill. The most powerful tool of a majority leader is control of the agenda, and it's safe to say Lott would have handled things differently.

The fate of the world does not hang on the outcome of this year's Senate races. But some things do. Imagine the treatment a conservative Bush nominee for the Supreme Court will receive in a Daschle-led Senate. In the 1980s, a GOP-controlled Senate overwhelmingly confirmed Antonin Scalia, but a Senate in Democratic hands treated Robert Bork so badly a new verb—"to bork"—was coined for the unfair trashing of a nominee. Now Republicans are within striking distance of capturing the Senate. The tragic death of Paul Wellstone and the likely victory of whoever replaces him on the ballot doesn't change anything since Wellstone was likely to be reelected anyway. And the message to those who say it doesn't really matter who wins the Senate is still quite simple: You are very, very wrong. ♦

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Cheap Hawks Can't Fly

Bush has an ambitious foreign policy, but not the defense budget to match. BY FREDERICK W. KAGAN

IN RECENT SPEECHES and in the newly minted National Security Strategy, President Bush has declared that he intends to prosecute the war on terrorism aggressively and to oppose the acquisition of weapons of mass destruction by rogue states. U.S. actions in Afghanistan and preparations for a war against Iraq have confirmed that he means what he says. The president's forthright approach has been a welcome relief from a decade of confusion and misdirection. But there remains one critical component that the president does not mention: A year into this activist foreign policy, the defense agencies that will prosecute the war on terrorism remain starved of resources and thus incapable of fulfilling their assigned tasks. The rapidly developing crisis with North Korea sharply underlines this point.

Frederick W. Kagan is a military historian and co-author of While America Sleeps.

In 1994, Kim Jong Il extracted a series of bribes from a war-wary Clinton administration in return for the promise to terminate its nuclear program. Now, having admitted that it broke that promise, North Korea is preparing to demand another set of concessions for yet another promise. The Bush administration appears to understand that there comes a point at which the United States must insist that North Korea keep its promises without further bribes. This is the right course, but there is no way to guarantee that it won't lead to open conflict and, possibly, war. Can the United States win a war against North Korea? Of course. Estimates vary wildly on the number of casualties we would take and inflict, but that we would win is not in doubt.

What would happen, however, if war with North Korea broke out, or even threatened, while we were fighting around Baghdad? Or during the period after victory when thou-

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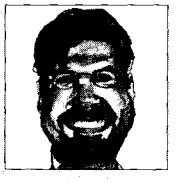

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sands of troops were required to restore order in Iraq? The answer is frightening. Our armed forces right now are not capable of fighting well in two such conflicts. The result would be not defeat in either, but almost certainly greater damage to our allies and many more casualties sustained by both sides than would be necessary if our military were more capable.

The great danger, however, is not that we would fight and endure damage, but that we would be deterred from fighting, leading us to yet another bad deal. Which could be disastrous. We know the North Koreans already possess highly advanced ballistic missile technology. And we have no reason to be confident that they would not make their weapons available to the highest bidders—for North Korea is an extremely poor and hungry country—or use them to blackmail us and their neighbors. In order to halt the North Korean nuclear arsenal, we need the strength to face the prospect of war with Pyongyang with equanimity.

In the short term, then, Bush's failure to champion increases in the numerical strength of the armed forces and to secure an adequate defense budget threatens to undermine his forthright foreign policy. Between the downturn of our economy and the upsurge of patriotism in the wake of September 11, it can no longer be said that there are not enough volunteers. The army needs probably 50,000 more soldiers on active duty (the equivalent of two divisions, plus increases in supporting elements); the navy and the air force need more pilots and crews; the Marines should have another expeditionary force on active duty. These are needed simply to execute the president's current plans.

The long-term picture is bleaker. The president rightly insists we transform the military to prepare for future conflict, but his current budget spends too little on "leap-ahead" technologies. The administration may already be heeding this criticism, however, and preparing to kill or reduce certain systems (including the F-22, the Comanche helicopter, and the navy's DD21) in order to fund the leap-ahead systems, missile defense, and the war on terrorism.

This is not an acceptable solution. Without developing the interim systems, it is impossible to know what the next set of systems should look like and what attendant changes should be made in organization, doctrine, and training. And the world will not wait for us to complete our leap. As events have shown, the armed forces must be able to meet multiple and significant threats even as the technologies they rely on are evolving. Killing the interim systems will reduce our capacity to respond to crises and likely force us to choose between accepting greater damage than is necessary and failing to act when action is essential.

The president's failure to champion sufficient increases in the defense budget threatens to undermine his forthright foreign policy.

It is vital, in other words, to fund both interim systems and "leap-ahead" technologies. The administration's other priorities—ballistic missile defense and homeland defense—are also important and necessary to the successful prosecution of the war on terrorism. But those efforts should not compete with conventional armed forces for funding.

In short, the defense budget must be increased dramatically. The Bush administration, it will be objected, has already increased the budget both in terms of proposals and in requests for emergency supplemental appropriations. Most of those increases are appropriate to help the nation respond to the terrorist attacks, but they do not touch on the problems outlined above. Increases of some $100 billion annually or more—over and above the increases already called for—will be necessary to provide for a defense establishment able to fulfill the president's national security strategy.

This fact should surprise no one. The president has repeatedly said we are at war, that it will last a long time, and that it may take many unpredictable turns. Which makes it all the stranger that President Bush has not called for a wartime budget.

Money alone, of course, will not solve the problem. The Department of Defense needs radical reform as much as the agencies handling homeland security do. The activities of the individual services need to be mutually supporting, to bring about truly joint planning and programming. Organizational and doctrinal reform within the services is also essential. Without it, no amount of advanced technology will transform the way we conduct war.

But it is time to face the fact that cash-starved bureaucracies are resistant to change. When an organization feels itself stretched beyond its capacities, it becomes defensive and unwilling to take risks. A zero-defects mentality, marked by an overwhelming fear of error, inevitably takes hold. In such an environment, significant change becomes impossible.

The truth is that we need to increase readiness and the size of the force today. We need to purchase interim systems, even flawed ones, to upgrade our capabilities in the mid-term. We need to invest heavily in generating truly transformational technologies for the long term. We need to fund missile defense and protect ourselves domestically against terrorism. We need to make thoroughgoing changes in the way our defense agencies do business. We need to transform our strategic and organizational culture fundamentally. And we need to do it all as quickly as possible, because the world will not wait for us to be ready. ♦

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Toward Democracy in Palestine?

Amir Taheri interviews Rawya Rashad Shawa, member from Gaza of the Palestinian National Council

EDITOR'S NOTE: *A defender of traditional Palestinian positions on the conflict with Israel, Rawya Rashad Shawa is also an outspoken advocate of Palestinian reform and democracy. A former columnist, Shawa was elected from Gaza in 1997 to the Palestinian National Council, where she is a leader of the anti-Arafat bloc. The interview excerpted here was conducted by Amir Taheri, editor of the French quarterly* Politique Internationale, *in mid-October in Amman, Jordan, and translated from Arabic by Taheri.*

Although much is written about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the outside world knows very little about domestic Palestinian politics. Why is that?

The main reason is the impression created by Chairman Yasser Arafat that he and he alone embodies the Palestinian political will. For years his message has been: Talk to me and you will not need to take notice of anyone else! He has never bothered to consult anyone, insisting on making his decisions alone. He is one of those politicians who can operate only in the dark, in secret.

He seems to have had his way for some time.

Yes. This is because the Arab governments with whom he dealt first were also run by men of the same culture of secrecy. They too were suspicious of pluralist politics and preferred to deal with just one man. That was the age of strongmen in the Arab world. And Arafat was the Palestinian strongman. After the Madrid Peace Conference in 1991, the Israelis began to feel threatened. This was because the Palestinians had fielded an alternative leadership that consisted of people who had lived and worked in Palestine all their lives, and who could put their case to the outside world, especially to the Americans, in attractive terms. The Israelis had always favored Arab leaders of the strongman type. This is because one man can always be cajoled, bought, or destroyed. That analysis led to the Oslo back channel, when the Israelis put Arafat back in orbit and began making secret deals with him.

Does this mean that Arafat did not consult the Palestinian National Council?

The council was always used as a rubber stamp. For example, when Arafat signed the Hebron accords [in 1997] we received the information from Azmi Bisharah [an Arab member of the Israeli Knesset]. This is because the Israeli government had to inform the Israeli parliament. Arafat never felt the need to come to us and seek support for his secret deals. He didn't need any advice. He *was* Palestine. We were never given a clue. Arafat would send us [Nabil] Shaath or someone else from time to time to mumble a few meaningless phrases, and to kiss my hand and pay compliments, before disappearing. Abu Mazen [Arafat's deputy] was supposed to brief the members of our parliament's political commission. For three years there was not a single meeting, even for tea.

Are you not a bit hard on Arafat?

God is my witness that this is not a personal matter. Arafat has the same culture of authoritarianism, not to say dictatorship, that has marked almost all Arab leaders for as long as one can remember. What I am saying is that this style of rule, this authoritarianism, can lead only to disaster for Arabs, and in our case, for the Palestinians. We all see the military strength of the Israelis, their F-16s and Apache helicopters. But we should also see the strengths of their political system in which the government is responsible to the parliament, and the parliament is accountable to the electorate. All adversaries in history learn from each other and, in some aspects, come to resemble each other. In the struggle between our nation and the Israeli nation it is important for us to be politically as strong as they are. And that means a strong parliamentary system, accountable to the people. Because we cannot have a war machine like theirs does not mean that we should not have their democracy either.

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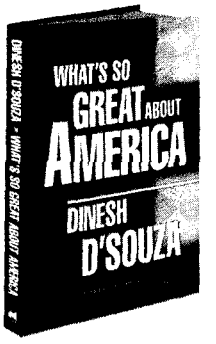

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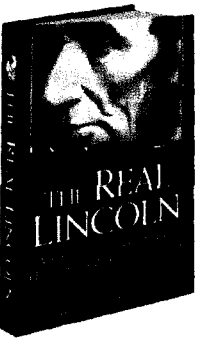

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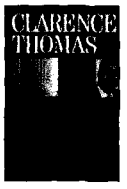

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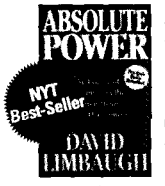

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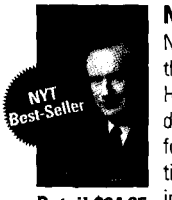

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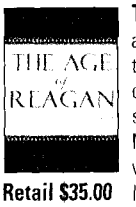

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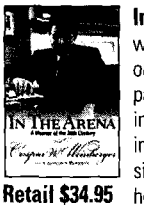

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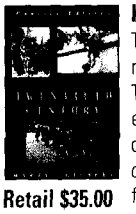

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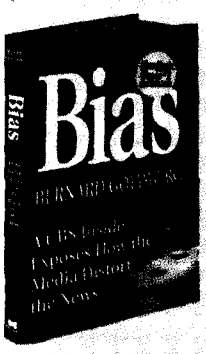

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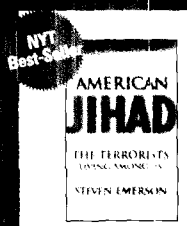

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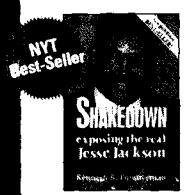

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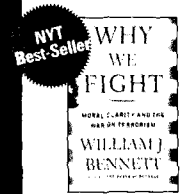

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Arafat is forming a new government. Will that make a difference?

Arafat asked the previous government to resign because he knew it would receive a no-confidence vote in the parliament. He wants to be the only one who can install or dismiss a government. Arafat refused to sign our Basic Law, which means we were run on an ad hoc basis, a nation without a legal framework. Now that he has signed it under American pressure, he is trying to circumvent it as much as possible. He is not behaving like that out of ill intentions. This is his political culture. He sincerely believes that democracy is nonsense and that great and dedicated leaders like him must lead nations.

Can the new government have a smooth ride in the parliament?

It is too early to tell. In any case what we need is fresh elections, both for the parliament and the president. Whatever government Arafat concocts will have no authority beyond day-to-day measures.

Does this mean that if Arafat makes a deal with the Israelis tomorrow you will not accept it?

Yes. The larger issues have to be dealt with in a new parliament and the new government that would emerge from it. In other words power has reverted to the people, who must now decide in fresh elections.

Can one hold meaningful elections under the present circumstances?

Sure. Some conditions must be present before we can have clean and fair elections. I think we need a six-month preparation period. The first step must be an Israeli military withdrawal from our cities and villages. Next we need a protection force. The Israelis say we threaten them. We say the Israelis are threatening us. A neutral interposition force could protect both of us in the period of the election. The entire exercise must be supervised by the United States, the European Union, and the United Nations to make sure there is no cheating and doctoring of the results.

What if Arafat and his Fatah group win again?

I doubt that he can, provided there is a free and fair campaign in which the people can be informed of the issues and the choices on offer. What will Arafat campaign on? His record is there for all to see. As for his strategy, it simply does not exist. He is always hoping that someone will extricate him from a tight corner, that something good will happen. But hope is no strategy.

What about despair? Is that a strategy? What if Hamas wins?

No, despair is not a strategy either. As for the possibility of Hamas winning, my answer is: Why not? If the people so decide, we have to respect their view. At present, however, there is no such possibility because Hamas boycotts general elections, participating only in local elections. Local elections, of course, have been postponed since 1999 for fear that Hamas might win in 400 municipalities. What I am saying is that we need a national strategy, not the personal strategy of one man. And the only way to develop a national strategy is to inform the nation and then ask it to decide.

Would such a national strategy be based on the two-states principle?

Yes. In 1972 my late father [Rashad Shawa, former mayor of Gaza] proposed a confederation of Jordan, Palestine, and Israel. Since then, however, that option has virtually disappeared. The two-state solution has been accepted, at least in principle, by a majority of our people. The Israelis, of course, love to go around the world and spread the lie that we want to throw them into the sea, when it is they who are forcing us out of our homes.

Would the national strategy that you talk about be based on the so-called Clinton Plan as presented in Taba late in 2000?

The so-called Clinton Plan was a craftier version of the so-called Barak Plan. Much of it was window dressing, designed to confuse the Palestinians and then blame them for not wanting peace. I think that by rejecting the plan outright, Arafat acted childishly. He cast us in the role of

Rawya Rashad Shawa

Illustration by Earl Keleny

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villains and Barak, one of the most unprincipled of Israeli leaders, as a man of peace. He should have adopted a "yes-but" position, accepting the plan in principle but seeking further negotiations on aspects that we could not accept. Above all, he should have referred the whole thing to our parliament so that we could think together and decide together.

There are more than a dozen peace plans named after Arab, Israeli, and Western leaders, but none from Palestine. Does this mean you have no strategy?

Of course we have a strategy. As I have already mentioned, we accept the two-state formula. What is needed is negotiations on the modalities of achieving that goal with constant reference to key United Nations resolutions, notably 242 and 338. We have to agree on the status of East Jerusalem, which is a Palestinian city and must be the capital of a Palestinian state. We must also agree on borders and the sharing of waters. Last but not least, there is the question of the right of return.

Barak has said that accepting the right of return could produce a "flood" of Palestinian returnees who would change the nature of Israel as a Jewish state.

This is another sign of Barak's bad faith. The fact is that no state can reject the principle of the right of return because it is enshrined in international law and recognized by all states, including Israel. In other words, Israel is already committed by law to the right of return. Obviously, the time frame within which that right is exercised in practice and other modalities for such a major enterprise will have to be worked out through negotiations. The image of 4 or 5 million Palestinians suddenly appearing in Israel on the same day is nothing but a propaganda ploy designed to avoid a very serious and vital issue.

A top European Union official recently told us that the Palestinian Authority is one of the most corrupt governments in the world. Is that the case?

Yes. You have not heard the half of it! We have seen people who came with just one shirt a few years ago and are now multi-millionaires. Billions of dollars of aid have poured into the Palestinian areas without anyone having a clear idea of where they went. The parliament never received any report on where the money went. Nor was the parliament allowed to exercise its right of oversight. Who knows how many secret bank accounts have grown fatter and fatter. You can see foodstuffs donated to us by the European Union sold in Tel Aviv! The Authority's obsession with controlling everything has weakened and in some cases destroyed our civil society. Many non-governmental organizations that were active before the Oslo accords have either disappeared or become empty shells. It is a shameful situation. While the Israelis are stealing our land, some of our own people are picking our pockets.

I must ask if you approve of the suicide bombings?

I cannot tackle the question in those terms. The view from the outside is one thing, and what we experience each day quite another. Let me tell you my own experience of the past few days. In order to come to Amman I had to start seeking the necessary Israeli permits two weeks ago. I then had to go to Khan Yunus, where I was held up by the Israelis for hours before I could go to Egypt. From Cairo I had to take a plane to Amman. And I am supposed to be a member of a parliament recognized by all parliaments throughout the world. At any time, an Israeli soldier could have stopped or even arrested me. No one is safe. There is no guarantee that a missile will not kill you in your car or that a demolition squad will not raze your home to the ground. There is no guarantee that your home will not be raided at night, or that your water and electricity supplies will not be cut off. Day in and day out. Year in and year out. It is a miracle that more people are not driven to the edge of desperation. Look at me. I am a normal woman, a mother, a politician, and a good-natured individual. But even I could go absolutely mad under the pressure of occupation. When a house is on fire, some people may jump out of the window. Some may push others aside to save themselves. Would any sane person approve? Of course not. But you cannot drive human beings beyond the context of human life and still hold them to the highest ethical standard. There is one way to understand the depths of our misery: Come and live among us for some time.

But who is responsible for suicide bombings?

I think one-third is organized by Hamas and another third by Islamic Jihad. The remaining one-third must be regarded as individual acts.

What is the source of Hamas's strength?

The main source of Hamas's strength is the weakness of the Palestinian Authority. Hamas has a clear strategy, where the Authority has none. Hamas speaks clearly, while the Authority has a forked tongue. You may disagree with Hamas, but at least you know what it is saying. Hamas does not have as much money as the Authority. But it still has loads of money. Thus it can provide many of the services that are normally provided by the state: schools, social security, health services, and so on. In the context of our present politics, there is plenty of room for Hamas. Change the context, and Hamas will shrink to its natural constituency, which is much smaller.

Will you run if there is a presidential election?

Believe me, this is not about personal ambition. I am calling for a parliamentary system, not a presidential one, for collective decision-making in constant consultation with the Palestinian people. I am calling for an end to one-man rule. The way to our future is democracy. ♦

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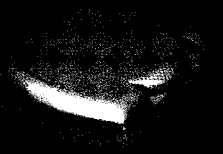

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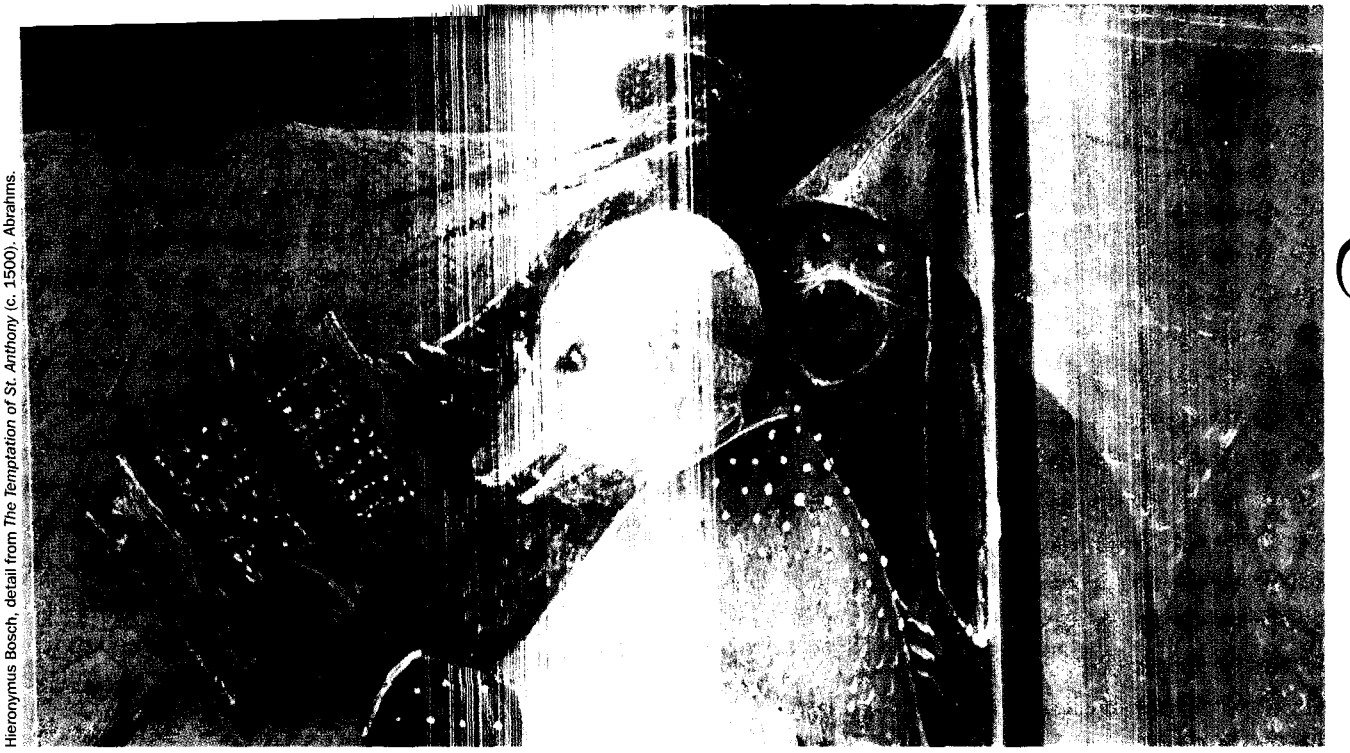

Hieronymus Bosch, detail from *The Temptation of St. Anthony* (c. 1500). Abrahms.

Liberty, Equality, Dignity

Leon Kass challenges the scientific project

By Andrew Ferguson

We live in a very rich country (in case you hadn't noticed), and from the heaping surplus of our prosperity we have carved a number of professions that—to put it as kindly as possible—are not completely, vitally necessary. The herbologist and the golf pro, the pollster and the journalism professor, the Feng Shui counselor and the aroma therapist: In a country less indulgent, less able to tolerate excess baggage, less rolling in dough, the labors of these men and women would be regarded as frivolous at best, freeloading at worst. And now, having followed the recent national debates over cloning, euthanasia, and other issues of biotechnology, I would like to add bioethicists to this list of spongers. What, you can't help but wonder, are they good for? To paraphrase the cultural critic Edwin Starr: absolutely nothing—in most cases.

Andrew Ferguson is a contributing editor to The Weekly Standard *and a national-affairs columnist for* Bloomberg News.

It was not always so. The job title "bioethicist" is only about thirty years old, and the first bioethicists had already led lives of distinction in other fields by the time the tag attached to them. Among the assortment of thinkers who coalesced to form the Hastings Center, the first research institution devoted to bioethics, there were lawyers (Paul Freund), theologians (Paul Ramsey), philosophers (Daniel Callahan), and biologists (Ernst Mayr), each of them capable, in his chosen line, of throwing the long ball.

Life, Liberty and the Defense of Dignity
The Challenge for Bioethics
by Leon R. Kass
Encounter, 313 pp., $26.95

What brought them together in the late 1960s and early 1970s was a desire to explore the moral significance of advances in medicine and biotechnology, which had just then set off at a galloping pace. Many of the developments that alarmed them, or in some cases merely intrigued them, have already come to pass or soon will: the generation of human life by nonsexual means, the genetic manipulation of offspring, the widespread harvesting of bodily organs, the use of human embryos for research, and so on.

Owing partly to the high standards these men brought to their work, bioethics grew in prestige among the thinking classes and in time became a profession. By the mid-1970s, you could get a degree in it. Hospitals and pharmaceutical companies were eager to hire you to "do" bioethics, under their auspices, at generous salaries. The paradoxical consequence was probably unavoidable. Just as schools of education now specialize in producing bad teachers and graduate programs in creative writing train novelists to be unreadable, the professionalization of bioethics produced very few moral philosophers and very many academic careerists and commercial hacks. The field is in bad shape.

In his new collection of essays, *Life,*

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Liberty and the Defense of Dignity: The Challenge for Bioethics, Leon Kass frames the problem this way: "The rise of professional bioethics may have been good for bioethicists, but how good has it been for our ethics? Have these been substantial improvements in the practices or moral sensibilities of physicians, scientists, entrepreneurs, or the general public in bioethical matters? Are the choices that we are making . . . better than they were thirty years ago and better than they would have been in the absence of the work of bioethicists?"

Kass's answer, as you might have guessed, is no. He speaks from inside the profession himself. A physician by training, he was one of the founders of Hastings and one of the first medical doctors to make bioethics his main occupation. He's still at it. Last year, President Bush appointed him chairman of the President's Council on Bioethics, which made news this summer when it publicly recommended a national three-year ban on the cloning of human embryos.

Kass's commission is a demonstration of how he thinks that bioethics, at its best, should proceed. The first bioethicists, trained in law, philosophy, medicine, and the life sciences, were amateurs—there being no such thing as a professional bioethicist in those days—who were drawn to the intersection of morality and science by their own intellectual curiosity and moral concern. In the same way, Kass has attracted a variety of intellectual types to sit on the president's council: a couple of legal scholars, a clinical psychiatrist, a sociologist, three philosophers, several research scientists, even a journalist. None of them has formal training in "bioethics." They meet in public sessions at regular intervals, trade ideas constantly by e-mail, and occasionally, as with their recommendation of a cloning ban, touch earth long enough to issue a bull on a subject of political interest.

The council, under Kass's direction, treats bioethics as an open-ended inquiry. Two of its sessions have been given over to long and rambling discussions of short stories; the stories were instructive because, in Kass's reading, they touched on "the deepest human questions." This is not, needless to say, the way that bioethics is usually done nowadays. Like so many specialized fields, bioethics has succumbed to the tyranny of expertise. "The ethicist," Kass writes in one of these essays, has become "another technical expert like the ophthalmologist or the cardiologist." We call ethicists in to solve specific problems. Has grandma had a stroke? The hospital has an ethics board that specializes in just such "termination-of-treatment cases." Is a biotech firm about to clone the CEO? It will have an ethicist on retainer, who has studied the procedure in all its particulars and can reassure the public (and the shareholders).

Reuters, Photo Archive

These bioethicists do their work in a tidy and efficient manner. It is their job to abstract problems from the specific human situation before them and apply rationally developed theories toward their resolution. But this process, as Kass knows, has it exactly backwards. Experts work this way, but real people, in real life, don't, and shouldn't. When grandma takes sick, the discussions of the hospital ethics board will be very different from the ones that her family, together with friends and clergy and doctors, undertake at bedside. The board's discussions "are generalized, remote, highly influenced by the current fashions of bioethics," such as the newly minted "right to die." We laymen, on the other hand, will bring to the discussion the sum of our attachments and affections, and our deepest beliefs about what life is and what it's for. And this human element is what bioethics commonly leaves out. "Moral life," says Kass, "flows from character—ingrained, concrete, steady, like a second nature"—and not from the bloodless application of theory.

And moral life, meanwhile, has its origins in tradition, reinforced by a community, where decent conduct and sensibility are rewarded and encouraged by law and custom. "Speech and philosophy have a role to play here," Kass writes, "but we should not exaggerate their power." Moral understanding, in other words, is built into a man, not laid on top of him. And we certainly can't be argued into it by fine reasoning.

Why then have we begun to defer to ethical experts, these hired guns in the rational arts, when it comes to the most intimate matters of life and death? Because it seems there's nowhere else to turn. The tradition and community that once instilled moral understanding have been corroded. Following the depredations of modernism and post-modernism, and maybe even post-post-modernism, our contemporary culture is uniquely impoverished. As Kass puts it, we now lack "a master cultural and moral narrative that can guide us through the minefields of the biotechnological revolution"—a revolution that presents us with questions of selfhood, identity, and mortality. In an earlier age we might have turned to religion to guide our responses. But religion and religious premises are no longer deemed suitable for public disputation in a pluralistic society—and certainly not appropriate in the secular hothouse where bioethicists cultivate their theories.

For bioethicists, as for an ever larger segment of the intelligent public, the "master narrative" is today provided by science. And who can blame them? Unlike the messy accumulations of tradition, science seems surefooted and hardheaded. Science works. Its method has brought us undreamed-of successes—marvels of technology, cures and

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treatments for disease, a lifespan nearly twice what it was a century ago. The problem is that on the big questions of who we are, why we are here, what we are for, science has nothing to say. Yet its silence is taken as affirmative evidence: What science can't account for, doesn't exist. If Darwinian theory shows evolution to be a series of chance events, then the universe itself must lack larger purpose. If neuroscience fails to locate a soul in the folds of the brain, then the self must be an illusion. If biochemistry shows thoughts and emotions to be endlessly manipulable, then free will is a lie.

Thus does our new master narrative devolve into the crudest materialism. Kass quotes a manifesto released in 1997, signed by an army of well-known biologists and ethicists, in support of cloning human embryos for research. According to some "ancient theological scruples," the manifesto said, "human nature is held to be unique and sacred." But the signers were not fooled by such hoary superstitions: "As far as the scientific enterprise can determine, humanity's rich repertoire of thoughts, feelings, aspirations, and hopes seem to arise from electrochemical brain processes, not from an immaterial soul that operates in ways no instrument can discover."

The nihilistic implications of this view, now so widely shared, are pretty thoroughgoing. It is a view that undercuts even itself. As Kass notes, no one who holds it could claim any standing to declare the results of his own "electrochemical brain processes" truer than anyone else's. The very scheme of truth versus error—defined in any sense beyond "what works" versus "what doesn't"—becomes unsustainable. So does much else that should be essential to the bioethical project. When science overtakes morality, sooner or later all notions of dignity, freedom, self and soul, purpose and attainment, the very foundations of ethical inquiry, are ploughed under.

As a profession, then, bioethics finds itself in a pickle. Its original purpose was to place proper limits on the uses we make of science. Yet just at the moment when science reaches for new and unimagined powers, bioethics lacks the philosophical wherewithal to provide any guidance at all. It's little wonder that the profession tumbles down into either corruption or irrelevance. Bioethics has become an instrument of the enterprise it was meant to police. Many bioethicists serve as corporate shills, trotted out by biotech companies to certify that whatever new technology their employers pursue for profit is officially "ethical." Others expend their professional energies on subsidiary questions, or even trivialities.

Here's one example. The success of the Human Genome Project has raised the prospect of "genetic profiling"—assessing a person on the basis of his genetic predisposition to certain kinds of behavior or disease. Among bioethicists, the discussion has been about politics and employment law. How will we prevent employers from discriminating against applicants on the basis of their profile? How will medical insurance rates be fairly adjusted in light of this genetic knowledge? What are the implications for the "right to privacy"?

These are interesting questions, perfect for op-ed page chitter chatter, and no doubt in time legislators and regulators will resolve them (probably without much useful participation from bioethicists). But they are not the important questions; they are not the questions that might point us toward restoring the moral narrative.

Kass approaches the issue of genetic profiling entirely differently. He considers the purposes of the technology itself and its unforeseen consequences. He points to "the hazards and the deformations in living your life that will attach to knowing in advance your likely or possible medical future." Is there sometimes a wisdom in not knowing certain things? The Greeks taught that "ignorance of one's own future fate was indispensable to aspiration and achievement."

Further, how will genetic profiles alter the way in which we think about others, about what it means to be human? "One of the most worrisome aspects of the godlike power of the new genetics is its tendency to 'redefine' a person in terms of his genes," Kass writes. "Once a person is decisively characterized by his genotype, it is but a short step to justifying death solely for genetic sins." Anyone who doubts this should consider the widely popular practice of prenatal genetic screening, after which enormous pressure is brought upon parents to abort any child with a "defect" like Down Syndrome. What that first generation of bioethicists feared is already here.

The questions Kass poses will strike most current bioethicists, and perhaps most of the rest of us too, as fussy and grandiose. They are certainly inconvenient; taken seriously, they might even stand in the way of "progress." Research cloning, genetic therapies, and the rest of the biological revolution have led to a giddiness about the promise of technology and boundless human aspiration—a giddiness that today's bioethicists actively encourage. Kass, in contrast, is a twenty-first century Jeremiah, trying to revive our appreciation for humility, mystery, and human finitude. He could not be more out of step with his times. His work, and this book especially, is a reminder of the original promise of bioethics. It is brave, wise, and

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The Sun Never Sets...

Building an empire, American style.

BY MAX BOOT

In the past year, the United States has installed a new regime in Afghanistan. We are likely to do the same before long in Iraq. Skeptics suggest that we Americans are not very good at this sort of thing, that imperialism goes against our national grain, and that we should resist the siren call of "nation-building."

Thus John Quincy Adams famously warned that we should not go abroad "in search of monsters to destroy," words that have been quoted by isolationists ever since.

Photos: Roosevelt, Mahan, Lodge, Root, Hay, F.S.G.

First Great Triumph
How Five Americans Made Their Country a World Power
by Warren Zimmermann
Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 544 pp., $30

American Empire
The Realities and Consequences of U.S. Diplomacy
by Andrew J. Bacevich
Harvard University Press, 320 pp., $29.95

The truth is somewhat more complicated. As Henry Cabot Lodge noted in 1895, "We have a record of conquest, colonization, and territorial expansion (Westward—as Washington taught!) unequalled by any people in the nineteenth century." Even the aforementioned John Quincy Adams got in on the act. As president in 1819 he bought the Floridas from Spain, and in 1823 he propounded what became known as the Monroe Doctrine, which turned Latin America into a "sphere of influence" of the United States and became the justification for numerous military interventions.

Frequent contributor Max Boot, a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, is author of The Savage Wars of Peace: Small Wars and the Rise of American Power.

If this is the record of one of America's leading anti-imperialists, it is not surprising that such avowedly expansionist presidents as Thomas Jefferson and James Polk added millions of acres more. True, most of these acquisitions were subsequently settled and incorporated into the American union on equal terms with the original states. But much of this territory underwent some period of quasi-colonial existence when its people did not exercise full sovereignty. Puerto Rico, Guam, and a few other scattered islands remain in this constitutional netherland today.

Of course when people speak of "American Empire" these days, they do not mean the formal process of acquiring territory abroad, something the United States has not done in a century. Imperialism also includes, as the naval strategist Alfred Thayer Mahan pointed out, "the extension of national authority over alien communities."

By this standard, the United States has extended its authority over quite a large portion of the world—despite the fact that we preside over few outright dependencies. Mostly we head an alliance of states looking to America for direction and protection. Western Europe has been drifting out of the American orbit since the end of the Cold War, but we have added several other regions over which we exercise a good deal of oversight: the Middle East, Southern and Eastern Europe and, most recently, Central Asia. This may not be the formal imperialism of old, but as a description of America's unique role in the world no more apt word has yet been coined.

To find the origins of America's current role abroad one must go back a century. Warren Zimmermann, a former ambassador to Yugoslavia, has done just that. In *First Great Triumph: How Five Americans Made Their Country a World Power*, he has produced an enjoyable and expertly written account of five men who together helped make America a great power: Alfred Thayer Mahan, Henry Cabot Lodge Sr., John Hay, Elihu Root, and Theodore Roosevelt.

Well educated and well traveled, these five give lie to the myth that American political leaders have been bumbling boors. All but Root were prolific authors. Lodge wrote twenty-seven books and Roosevelt thirty-eight, mainly works of history. Hay had a wider range, turning out not only a leading biography of Lincoln but also popular poems and novels. Only two, Lodge and Roosevelt, were born to privilege; the others sprang from the sturdy middle class. They were ambitious not only for themselves, but for their country.

John Hay had no experience in politics, yet, through the help of a school friend, he became at twenty-two a private secretary to President Lincoln, a post he kept throughout the Civil War. After Lincoln's death, Hay went through brief stints as a diplomat and editorial writer before marrying an heiress and moving to her hometown of Cleveland, where he became a wealthy businessman. A major supporter of William McKinley's campaign in 1896, Hay was rewarded with an appointment as ambassador to London, followed not long after by elevation to secretary of state. He was not a complete enthusiast for empire, and he wasn't a particularly

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energetic secretary of state. But he left two important legacies: He helped turn Anglo-American relations from enmity to amity, and he issued the "Open Door" notes that established free trade as a bedrock principle of U.S. policy.

Alfred Thayer Mahan was a more committed imperialist. A dour naval officer, he was such a misfit that in 1885 the Navy shunted him aside into the new Naval War College in Newport. It was there that he put together the lectures that formed the basis of his famous 1890 book, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History*. His thesis—that naval power was the key to a nation's being a great power, and the way to acquire that power was to build a fleet of capital ships—instantly became orthodoxy in ministries from Tokyo to London. A corollary, in the age of steam, was that any great naval power needed access to coal stockpiles around the world, and that this in turn required colonial possessions. (The worldwide success of his writing did nothing to endear Mahan to his superiors, one of whom stated sourly, "It is not the business of a naval officer to write books.")

Elihu Root enjoyed a much more effortless climb to the top. He was the sort of person who, upon joining an exclusive bass fishing club on Martha's Vineyard, caught the fish of the season in his first year as a member. By profession, Root was a corporate lawyer, one of the best in New York. He was also the first of the "wise men" who shuttled between lucrative private-sector employment and influential government jobs. Despite his lack of experience in military matters, Root was appointed secretary of war by William McKinley, and he carried out his duties with great energy and efficiency. He largely succeeded in building humane and effective governments in the territories acquired in 1898—thanks in part to the help he received from such capable proconsuls as William Howard Taft and Leonard Wood. Upon Hay's death, President Theodore Roosevelt moved Root over to run the State Department, where he won a Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts to promote international law.

Henry Cabot Lodge, by contrast, became famous for his opposition to the leading international treaty of his day: the Treaty of Versailles, which created the League of Nations. It is unfortunate that he has gone down in the popular imagination as an isolationist. As a freshman senator in the 1890s he was one of the primary advocates of a large navy and a significant American role in the world, positions from which he never deviated over the course of his long Senate career. Lodge was a unilateralist, not an isolationist, an important distinction that multilateralists deliberately elide.

Lodge was also by nature bookish, irascible, and arrogant. He knew his limits and realized that the presidency was not in his future. As if in compensation, he pushed his fellow Brahmin and close friend Theodore Roosevelt toward the White House. "He saw in Roosevelt

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the battering ram he needed to achieve a powerful navy and a muscular policy of expansion," writes Zimmermann. Lodge was not disappointed. First as assistant secretary of the Navy, then as vice president and president, Roosevelt pointed America firmly toward the ranks of the great powers, brushing away all obstacles, notably pacifists and anti-imperialists (whom he privately denounced as "unhung traitors").

Along the way Roosevelt lost his enchantment with formal colonies. The Philippines, Cuba, Puerto Rico, and other lands seized in the war with Spain could not be comfortably incorporated into the United States, as earlier territories had been. But though Roosevelt refused to annex any more foreign lands, he did send U.S. troops to occupy Cuba for three years and restore constitutional government. This became the model for many such interventions over the years, from Woodrow Wilson's forays into Haiti and the Dominican Republic to the recent campaigns in Kosovo and Afghanistan. Roosevelt also set another American pattern by negotiating an end to the Russo-Japanese War. Subsequent presidents have tried to emulate his feat, perhaps hoping, like Roosevelt, to win a Nobel Peace Prize. As Bill Clinton learned at Camp David in 2000, however, peacemaking is harder than it looks.

Some have tried to portray the turn-of-the-century imperialism of Roosevelt and his friends as an aberration in American history that was soon abandoned—in proof of which, they point to the fact that America acquired no more colonies. Zimmermann, however, argues for continuity: "The imperial initiation at the end of the nineteenth century had prepared Americans for the great power role that, in the twentieth century, only they could play."

Andrew Bacevich, a former Army officer who now teaches international relations at Boston University, also believes in continuity. In his new *American Empire*, he picks up the story eight decades later, in the 1990s, when the United States held a hegemonic position around the globe that it had previously enjoyed only in the Caribbean.

Bacevich has no time for the prevailing wisdom that American foreign policy is scattershot and episodic, lacking a central direction. "Since the end of the Cold War," he writes, "the United States has in fact adhered to a well-defined grand strategy" to "expand an American imperium" by "removing barriers that inhibit the movement of goods, capital, ideas, and people." America's purpose is "the creation of an open and integrated international order based on the principles of democratic capitalism, with the United States as the ultimate guarantor of order and enforcer of norms."

As evidence for his continuity thesis, Bacevich points to the foreign policies of the first Bush administration and the Clinton administration. Both promoted free trade agreements such as NAFTA and the WTO. Both used the armed forces freely, whether in Bosnia or Somalia. And both made compromises with the "Butchers of Beijing" in order to preserve a lucrative economic relationship.

There are obvious differences between the overwhelming force of Bush's Gulf War and Clinton's pinprick airstrikes. But Bacevich is persuasive in arguing that the American presidency has been for a decade pursuing a policy of military hegemony on the cheap. American commitments around the world, and the American readiness to use force in defense of those commitments, have steadily grown since the end of the Cold War, regardless of who occupied the White House.

Bacevich's description of American empire is compelling and a major contribution, but his analysis of how it came about is more open to question. He gives a surprisingly respectful hearing to Charles Beard and William Appleman Williams, two Marxist historians who could put a nefarious spin on any American foreign policy. Beard opposed entry into World War II, even after Pearl Harbor, mocking those who called for "another preposterous crusade for democracy on the battle-fields of Europe." Williams, for his part, thought the United States, not Russia, was the aggressor in the Cold War.

Bacevich disassociates himself from these views, but in describing U.S. interventions of the past decade he occasion-

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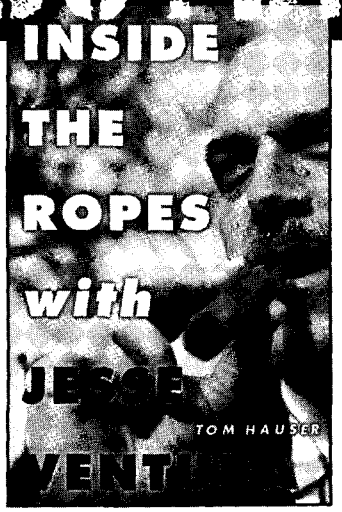

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ally sounds like Beard or Williams. Thus, he is contemptuous of the claim that America entered Kosovo for largely idealistic reasons. "Military intervention was simply part of the inevitable price of doing business," he writes. "The essence of that strategy was business *and* American political clout."

By this he means that America intervened in Kosovo to maintain American predominance in Europe and lucrative economic ties. There is perhaps a bit of truth to this, but the assertion that humanitarian considerations—the primary justification cited by United States policymakers—played *no role* seems unreal. Neither Kissingerian realpolitik nor a Hamiltonian desire to promote commerce can fully explain the military effort the United States unleashed in such an inconsequential place as Kosovo.

Bacevich's view regarding Kosovo is no inadvertent lapse. He believes that materialism, multiculturalism, and libertine social attitudes have fundamentally corrupted America. By the 1990s, he writes, "the American people no longer held *in common* any higher purpose." The only thing uniting citizens together was "a fetish for shopping, professional sports, and celebrities, along with a ravenous appetite for pop culture." Thus, he finds it impossible to believe that any American president could rally the people behind an intervention on moral grounds.

It is hard to square this jaundiced view of America with the heroism and patriotism evident after September 11. What Bacevich fails to note is that America has *always* been defined by a combination of materialism and idealism, low striving and high ideals, avarice and altruism. European visitors of the nineteenth century, Charles Dickens among them, made dyspeptic observations on American life similar to Bacevich's. But this did not prevent Americans from rising to the challenge of the Civil War, the Great Depression, World War II, and the Cold War. In many instances, America acted with great generosity. Those who always seek low motives for American interventions—such as the leftists who insist that President Bush wants to invade Iraq "for the oil"—are likely to be left scratching their heads in incomprehension at American actions. How much oil is there in Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, Kosovo, or Afghanistan?

This is not to claim that the American empire has been entirely selfless or free of abuses and mistakes. Nor is to suggest that the path of empire will be smooth and easy; Bacevich is right to warn of "hazards, political, strategic and, above all, moral." The case for empire is not that it is risk-free; it is that the hazards of inaction are greater. If someone does not step in and play the role of globo-cop, predatory states like Iraq, Iran, and Syria will continue sponsoring murderous terrorist groups.

It is by no means certain that a Bush administration which once disdained "nation building," and which still refuses to do enough in Afghanistan, will meet this monumental challenge. If the administration does not, it will miss a historic chance to make the world a safer place. But if it does, George W. Bush, Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz, and Condoleezza Rice may one day be remembered alongside Theodore Roosevelt, Elihu Root, Henry Cabot Lodge, John Hay, and Alfred Thayer Mahan as architects of American greatness. ♦

Reality Fiction

Christopher Buckley's novel makes even Washington funny. **BY NOEMIE EMERY**

A Washington novel by Christopher Buckley is cause for rejoicing. So are his non-fiction essays, of course—but then, his novels are much like his essays: not novels so much as tweaks on reality, which come out much more real than life. He has perfect pitch for the tones of modern political culture, from the way bureaucrats think to the way lawyers argue. He knows how different hosts conduct their talk programs, the accents and tropes of pundits, and the bestseller listings in the *New York Times*. Buckley's Washington is just like itself, only more so. Call it "faction." Call it Ishmael. Call it hilarious.

No Way to Treat a First Lady
by Christopher Buckley
Random House, 320 pp., $24.95

Christopher Buckley has presented his city of faction in a series of novels and in *Wry Martinis*, a collection of essays. Buckley came to Washington in 1981 to work as a speechwriter for George H.W. Bush, the vice president. Five years later he gave us his first take on government success and excess with a mock memoir entitled *The White House Mess*, about the administration of Thomas N. Tucker, the Democratic governor of Idaho who succeeded Ronald Reagan in 1989 and was defeated in a landslide four years later. The fictional Tucker owed a great deal to the (almost) real President Carter, whom he tended to match in well-meaning cluelessness. The novel included a Soviet move to take over Bermuda, a liberal aide with a yacht called *The Compassion*, and a film star first lady who left in mid-crisis to go off on location—all told in the voice of one Herbert Wadlough, the president's friend from his hometown of Boise, who sustains himself in crises on cups of hot water.

Having laid waste to the executive branch of the government, Buckley moved on, in *Thank You for Smoking*, to the culture of K Street, especially to the lobbyists for the tobacco, alcohol, and firearms industries. He had planned, he says, to write a long exposé that would be boring and serious. Instead, he wrote

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a wildly funny short novel about former reporter Nick Naylor, who loses his job when he mistakenly declares the president dead on live television and then has to sell his soul to the tobacco industry to pay the mortgage on his ex-wife's big house in the Cleveland Park neighborhood of Washington. Naylor spends his days lying and taking abuse from the public. He is called a whore by his father, a killer at forums, and gets death threats when he appears on television. A good soul at heart, Nick in the end turns in his employers, serves two years in a public facility, writes a best-seller, and marries a former flack for big alcohol. Nick explains the whole story on *Larry King Live.*

Nick makes several appearances in Buckley's latest, *No Way to Treat a First Lady*, as the put-upon publicist to a Hollywood actress, a more voluptuous version of Barbra Streisand. Presidential scandals and celebrity trials were the news stories of the mid-1990s. What might happen, one can almost hear Buckley thinking, if one of the objects allegedly flung by the first lady at her philandering husband actually did him some harm?

The first sign that Buckley had made this connection came in a parody in the *New Yorker*, in which Hillary Clinton hires Johnnie Cochran to represent her after her fingerprints—and O.J. Simpson's—are found on Whitewater documents. "I put it to you," Buckley has the lawyers ask, "if you came home and found your ex-wife thanking a man who had once appeared on the television show *Studs* for returning a pair of her mother's eyeglasses, wouldn't you go a little bit nuts?" After an incubation period of about seven years, we now have his new novel, the perfect storm of sex, scandal, lawyers, and politics, the mother of all celebrity trials, in which the celebrity defendant is the first lady, the celebrity lawyer is her onetime fiancé and ex-lover, and the celebrity corpse is none other than the president himself.

As the story begins, President Kenneth MacMann, having hosted a dinner for Uruguay's president, makes his way down the hall to the Lincoln Bedroom, where Babette Van Anka, film star, singer, fund-raiser, and Middle East activist, is waiting to make yet another donation. Some hours later, much the worse for wear, he staggers back into his bedroom, where First Lady Beth MacMann ("Lady Bethmac" to her many detractors) correctly guesses what he was up to and hurls an antique sterling-silver Paul Revere spittoon at his cranium. The events being fairly routine in the family quarters, the first couple retire, but only one of them awakes in the morning. By the dawn's early light, the commander in chief is assuming room temperature, his eyes staring, his mouth open, and the word "Revere" embossed in reverse on his forehead.

In short order, the arraignment of Beth MacMann for the assassination of her president-husband becomes the Trial of the Millennium (the millennium then being about two years old). In her dire straits, she turns to Boyce ("Shameless") Baylor, the world's greatest lawyer, the first one to charge $1,000 an hour and to be widely assumed to be worth it.

Back in 1972, Beth and Boyce had been students and sweethearts at Georgetown University's law school. But her affections were stolen by Ken ("War God") MacMann, whose heroic past and chestful of medals quite staggered her gullible heart. Beth dumps Boyce, with dire effects on the both of them. She begins to regret it almost at once, as Ken starts to hit on her bridesmaids, while Boyce goes through four short, flameout marriages to models and Eurotrash. But his newly coined bleak views about human nature make him a sure bet for absolute stardom in the carnivorous world of the law. He defends crooks and pond scum; he defends liars and psychopaths; he even defends other lawyers. He makes the cover of *Time*, and millions of dollars. He defends, of course, Beth.

Take the Clinton impeachment debate, add the O.J. Simpson trial, add the imagination of a veteran novelist, and you'll come up with something almost like Christopher Buckley's *No Way to Treat a First Lady*, which is almost as strange as some things that go on in real life. There is wall-to-wall media coverage, from the tabloid *Perspirer* to *Hard Gavel*, the court talk show with perennial lawyer-guest Alan Crudman. Boyce takes three adjoining suites in the Jefferson Hotel for a nightly cost of $7,500, and makes use of "Jeeter" (the "Juror Real Time Response Evaluator") to record and tabulate the expressions and gestures of the jurors.

Along the way, old passions revive, and love is rekindled. Boyce proposes to Beth, and Beth accepts him. Boyce taints the jury and is arrested (while on the *Today* show). He is demoted to motels in Rosslyn and directs the defense from a distance, as Beth becomes her own courtroom lawyer. She does not, it turns out, have a fool for a client—but find out the rest for yourself.

The funniest thing about *No Way to Treat a First Lady* is how close it is to real life. The same things are there, but shaken up different. What if Bill Clinton had John McCain's résumé, Hillary Clinton were nicer, and Barbra Streisand married Marc Rich? The best parts of these books are the ones that stay close to reality: Buckley's long riffs on the *Larry King* program, for instance, and Jeffrey Toobin's "reports" to Peter Jennings on ABC's *World News Tonight*. It is no accident that Buckley's weakest novel, *Little Green Men*, was also his book that kept least close to the real life of day-to-day Washington. And the best parts of that book are his portraits of Vernon Jordan, Pamela Harriman, and Ample Ampere, the fictional sponsor of a political talk show that markets the electric chair.

Nick Naylor, Boyce Baylor, where will it all end? Life keeps on creating these wonderful targets. God Himself is beginning to think just like Christopher Buckley—in which case, may God help us all. ♦

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Mencken Trouble

Terry Teachout's life of the bad boy of Baltimore.

BY GEORGE WEIGEL

In the fall of 1923, James M. Cain, a reporter then aspiring to a literary career, had lunch in Baltimore with H.L. Mencken, who was on the verge of launching a new journal, the *American Mercury*. Despite the fact, or perhaps because of the fact, that Mencken did nearly all the talking during a four-hour meal, Cain left under the spell. He felt, he said later, "like a boy who had had his baseball autographed by Babe Ruth."

The Skeptic
A Life of H.L. Mencken
by Terry Teachout
HarperCollins, 432 pp., $29.95

At the time, virtually every literate American would have instantly understood both ends of the analogy. Today, even the most avid young reader might be puzzled on stumbling across Cain's reminiscence—and not by the reference to the Sultan of Swat. Terry Teachout's long-awaited *The Skeptic: A Life of H.L. Mencken* thus comes at an opportune moment. It has been a decade or more since a bruising controversy over Mencken's character was precipitated by the release of the diary and literary reminiscences that Mencken had left to Baltimore's Pratt Library under a set of rolling time locks. Teachout has mined these materials in a calmer, more measured spirit. The result, if not a definitive study of the man and his work, is a reliable and enjoyable introduction to one of America's greatest writers, a book that will help post-Boomer generations meet, enjoy, be enraged, and ultimately be baffled by the Bad Boy of Baltimore.

I have been reading Mencken for more than thirty years, and still find him endlessly entertaining—and unsolvable. How could a man who lived such a vigorous social life and who was, by all accounts, an exemplary colleague on both newspapers and magazines, leave behind a diary full of acid deprecations of his former associates and friends, knowing full well that these portraits would only be read when the subjects were long beyond the capacity to defend themselves (and when the author was beyond the reach of criticism)?

Why was the man who was arguably the greatest columnist in American newspaper history so spectacularly wrong as a political pundit, and why did he misread national and international politics so badly in the 1930s? How does one fit into a single coherent portrait the success of Mencken's scholarship on the American language—a discipline he invented in its modern form—and the failure of the books he thought would constitute his intellectual legacy as a "critic of ideas": his studies of democracy, religion, and ethics? How could the man who staunchly promoted Dreiser, Conrad, Cather, Lewis, Norris, London, and Fitzgerald brag about never having read Dostoyevsky and dismiss *The Age of Innocence* as a Genteel Tradition confection devoid of "all character, all distinction"? How could this lifelong skeptic write a violent denunciation of Bryan when the Great Commoner died just after the Scopes Trial—and then blast theological modernism and pen a discerning and affectionate obituary column on the death in 1937 of J. Gresham Machen, the Presbyterian theologian he dubbed "Dr. Fundamentalist"?

The Skeptic does not resolve these Menckenian mysteries and conun-

George Weigel is the author of Witness to Hope: The Biography of Pope John Paul II *and, most recently,* The Courage To Be Catholic: Crisis, Reform, and the Future of the Church.

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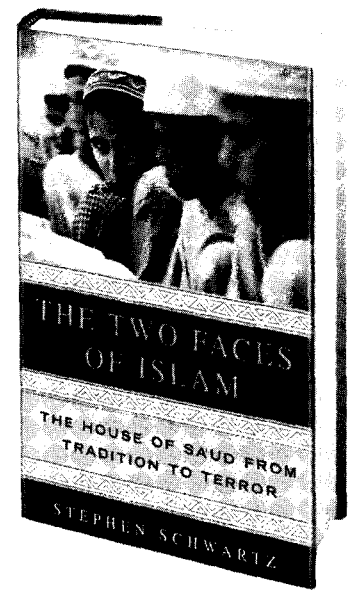

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drums, but it does not avoid them, either. Terry Teachout is clearly sympathetic to his subject, but he gives readers both Mencken's virtues and his warts. These often marched in tandem: Mencken's great capacity for friendship matched his coldbloodedness when friends (like founding *Mercury* co-editor George Jean Nathan) were no longer useful to him; Mencken's longstanding business relationship and personal friendships with Jews coexisted with his sniping anti-Semitic cracks; Mencken's promotion of black authors and his defense of civil rights went along with his unabashed adherence to theories of racial superiority popular among advanced thinkers of his time.

In getting at Mencken the man, Teachout is particularly successful in coming to grips with Mencken's incapacity or unwillingness to commit himself to one woman—until, that is, he met the Southern author Sara Haardt. The poignant tale of their five-year marriage, a love story beset, and finally doomed, by Sara's sundry illnesses, is well told here. In this instance, as throughout *The Skeptic*, Terry Teachout wisely avoids the temptations of long-distance psychoanalysis, temptations to which other Mencken biographers have too readily succumbed.

Teachout is also a wise guide to what is enduring in Mencken and what seems likely to endure for a very long time: his pioneering work on the distinctively American form of English; his essays in their refined form, to be found in *A Mencken Chrestomathy*; and his three volumes of reminiscence (*Happy Days*, *Newspaper Days*, and *Heathen Days*). In fact, if Teachout's biography induces new generations to read just the *Days* books, he'll have done readers a spectacular service. *Happy Days*, as Teachout suggests, is a remarkable memoir of childhood that is affectionate without being sentimental—no small trick. *Newspaper Days*, Teachout rightly notes, is quite simply the best portrait ever written of American journalism in the early twentieth century. *Heathen Days*, the most chronologically miscellaneous of the three, is also the least consistent in quality. But its irresistible lampoon of secondary education in late-nineteenth-century Baltimore, its hilarious (and wholly accurate) portrait of a 1917 Cuban revolution, and its tale of the effects of illicit bourbon at the 1920 Democratic convention are things that one can return to, again and again, simply to admire Mencken's mature mastery of his unique style—perhaps the most distinctively American of all twentieth-century literary voices.

What I miss in Teachout's *The Skeptic* is more of that voice—not so much in its later, smoother tones, but the raspier, deliberately grating voice of Mencken the political reporter and columnist. Having committed biography myself, I understand that some tough calls have to be made in selecting what gets quoted and what ends up on the cutting room floor. But if *The Skeptic* is to serve as a full-bodied introduction to Mencken's art for a new generation, then isn't something important missing when gems like Mencken on Warren G. Harding's inaugural address in 1921 don't make it into the book?

HarperCollins

H.L. Mencken

> On the question of the logical content of Dr. Harding's harangue of last Friday, I do not presume to have views. . . . But when it comes to the style of the great man's discourse, I can speak with . . . somewhat more competence, for I have earned most of my livelihood for twenty years past by translating the bad English of a multitude of authors into measurably better English. Thus qualified professionally, I rise to pay my small tribute to Dr. Harding. Setting aside a college professor or two and half a dozen dipsomaniacal newspaper reporters, he takes the first place in my Valhalla of literati. That is, he writes the worst English that I have ever encountered. It reminds me of a string of wet sponges; it reminds me of tattered washing on the line; it reminds me of stale bean soup, of college yells, of dogs barking idiotically through endless nights. It is so bad that a sort of grandeur creeps into it. It drags itself out of the dark abysm . . . of pish, and crawls insanely up to the topmost pinnacle of posh. It is rumble and bumble. It is flap and doodle. It is balder and dash.

Or Mencken on Gerald L.K. Smith at the 1936 convention of the Townsend pensioners' movement:

> His speech was a magnificent amalgam of each and every American species of rabble-rousing, with embellishments borrowed from the Algonquin Indians and the Cossacks of the Don. It ran the keyboard from the softest sobs and gurgles to the most ear-splitting whoops and howls, and when it was over the 9,000 delegates simply lay back in their pews and yelled.

Or Mencken covering the 1932 Democratic convention, wrestling with its Prohibition plank:

> Since one o'clock this morning Prohibition has been a fugitive in the remoter quagmires of the Bible Belt. The chase began thirteen hours earlier, when the resolutions committee of the convention retired to the voluptuous splendors of the Rose Room of the Congress Hotel. For four hours nothing came out of its stronghold save the moaning of converts in mighty travail. Then the Hon. Michael L. Igoe, a round-faced Chicago politician, burst forth with the news that the wet wets of the committee had beaten the damp wets by a vote of 35-17. There ensued a hiatus, while the quarry panted and the bloodhounds bayed. At seven in the evening the chase was resumed in the convention hall, and four hours later Prohibition went out the window to the stately tune of 934 3/4 votes to 213 1/4, or more than four to one. So the flight to the fastnesses of Zion began.

By offering a richer sampler of Mencken the reporter and columnist, Terry Teachout would not only have added to his readers' pleasure; he would have buttressed one of his own key analytic points, namely, that Mencken's high-voltage genius (imagine writing those lines about Gerald L.K. Smith on a manual typewriter under intense deadline pressure with little chance for refinement or correction) was capable of

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refinement into the no-less-engaging, but far more elegant, style on tap in the *Days* books and in the final form of Mencken's essays in the *Chrestomathy*. Mencken was, in brief, both a spectacularly gifted daily journalist and a master stylist whose uniqueness is demonstrated by the impossibility of his style's being successfully imitated (multiple attempts thereat notwithstanding).

The British broadcaster Alistair Cooke—despite being an Englishman, a breed for which Mencken had very little use—was a friend who once wrote that Mencken would be longest remembered as a great American humorist. (Perhaps Cooke came to that view after Mencken, observing an anorexic, stringy-haired female fan of Henry Wallace at his 1948 convention, said, *sotto voce*, "My God, just look at that woman. Makes you want to burn every bed in the world.") And there is surely an ample supply of laughs to be had from reading and rereading Mencken, particularly his political reporting and columnizing. But perhaps Cooke sells his friend too short. Terry Teachout may well be both more generous and more accurate when he proposes that Mencken will best be remembered as a unique stylist, a craftsman of American English.

For all his bluster and cynicism, Mencken reinforced his readers' *joie de vivre* as perhaps no American writer since Mark Twain. He continues to do so today. Those who haven't had the pleasure of being seduced by Mencken's craft can now discover him through Terry Teachout, an able and discerning guide—and then go get the *Days* books and the *Chrestomathy* on their own. ♦

Faith and Reason

Father Ernest Fortin, 1923-2002.

BY WERNER J. DANNHAUSER

The extraordinary scholar, political philosopher, and theologian Father Ernest Fortin passed away on Tuesday, October 22, at age seventy-eight, surrounded by Carmelite sisters praying the rosary on his behalf. With his eyes closed, he whispered, "I see something beautiful." They were his last words. An hour later, he was gone.

Gladly to Learn and Gladly to Teach
Essays on Religion and Political Philosophy in Honor of Ernest L. Fortin, A.A.
edited by Michael P. Foley and Douglas Kries
Lexington, 344 pp., $75

Dissent and Philosophy in the Middle Ages
Dante and His Precursors
by Ernest L. Fortin
Lexington, 182 pp., $22.95

The weekend before, he was well enough to be presented with a copy of *Gladly to Learn and Gladly to Teach: Essays on Religion and Political Philosophy in Honor of Ernest L. Fortin, A.A.*, edited by Michael P. Foley and Douglas Kries. A *Festschrift*, a celebratory collection of essays by a scholar's friend and students, usually consists of writings of varying merit and interest, of perfunctory pieces by heavy hitters and intense outbursts by ambitious youths.

Fortunately, *Gladly to Learn and Gladly to Teach* escapes the pitfalls of the genre. Its essays are of high quality, with not a dud among them. Above all, the book serves genuinely to honor Ernest Fortin, one of the greatest theologians of our time, by illuminating his work. In 1997 a stroke curtailed Fortin's productivity, but not before a huge collection of his writings was completed. That collection triggered a surge of recognition for Fortin's towering achievement, a movement now reaching new heights by way of this *Festschrift* and the newly published *Dissent and Philosophy in the Middle Ages: Dante and His Precursors*, a translation of Fortin's major study of Dante in French.

Ernest Fortin was a Catholic priest and a professor born in Woonsocket, Rhode Island, educated in Massachusetts, Rome, Paris, and Chicago. He taught, first at Assumption College, then, since 1971, as a professor of theology and political theory at Boston College. Michael P. Foley, one of the editors of *Gladly to Learn and Gladly to Teach*, provides an illuminating look at Fortin with an interview he conducted in 1999. The interview is especially delightful because, goaded by Foley's loving questions, Fortin divested himself of choice examples of his puckish wit (the targets of which can be friends as well as foes). Irrepressibly playful, Fortin in his writings teases priests, mocks bishops, skewers popes, and at times manifests a bit of insolence toward God Himself. His lightheartedness was all the more amazing when one considers his authorship of such weighty articles as "Augustine and the Problem of Christian Rhetoric" and "Clement of Alexandria and the Esoteric Tradition."

In speaking to Foley, Fortin paid generous tribute to two men who influenced him greatly. At the Sorbonne, he met a fellow student and fellow American, Allan Bloom, "the guy who made things come to life for me." (Back in the 1960s, Bloom told me about Fortin, describing him as a "man to whom you can talk about everything" and introducing us, so that I was blessed with Ernest Fortin's friendship for almost forty years.) In the course of their friendship, Bloom, in his typical fashion, asked, "Ernest, how come you know so little about politics?" The question hit home and spurred Fortin on to become a deep student of politics and political philosophy. Perhaps the greatest good Bloom conferred was to tell Fortin about Leo Strauss and then introduce the men to each other. Strauss later called Fortin "the most educated priest he had ever met." Fortin, in turn, studied at Chicago and became a self-described Straussian.

A Straussian theologian may seem a contradiction, but the example of Ernest

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Courtesy: Boston College.

Ernest Fortin, A.A.

Fortin demands that one deal with the phenomenon rather than dismiss it. Fortin identified four themes that form the "warp and woof" of his own work. They are (1) the "Jerusalem and Athens" tension between revealed religion and philosophy; (2) the centrality of *political* philosophy to philosophy and ultimately to human life; (3) the practice of "esoteric writing" or noble lies among philosophers; and (4) the distinction between ancient and modern philosophy, the latter being inaugurated by Machiavelli. These four themes are, and not by chance, also the main themes of the work of Leo Strauss.

This by no means signifies that Fortin was simply a follower of Strauss. The deepest differences between the two men remain to be pondered and may not be fully explicable, but a surface phenomenon may illuminate them. For some reason Strauss wrote very little about early and medieval Christian thought, while these are at the very center of Fortin's endeavor. Indeed, he has become our indispensable guide to this vast period of Western history. The field is so big, our ignorance so great, the hope of mastery so dim, that one is tempted to avoid it altogether. Along comes Fortin to encourage us—first by suggesting we concentrate on three giants, Augustine, Thomas, and Dante.

Understanding them is difficult, not so much because political theorists are simply ignorant but because we are prisoners of stock responses.

Thus Augustine is taken as an overly intense and tormented soul, the Dostoyevsky of the Middle Ages. Thomas is a portly and jovial priest who never met a synthesis he did not like. Dante is a poet rather than a thinker, the man who in *The Divine Comedy* set Augustine and Thomas to music.

Ernest Fortin mastered the art of the fresh look so many desire and so few accomplish. He demolished the dusts and crusts that obscure our views—partly by hard work, partly by way of a matchless erudition, and partly by a simple knack for careful reading. And he overcame the most persuasive stumbling block to such readings: the historicist prejudice that thought is decisively the product of its time. As a good historian, he knew that thought is indeed influenced by its time, but also that at its best it transcends its time. He learned from the thinkers he studied by daring to entertain the thought that what they say may be true.

Those who harbor a skepticism about these claims can now test them by way of Fortin's superb study of Dante, *Dissent and Philosophy in the Middle Ages: Dante and His Precursors*, published in 1981 and now beautifully translated by Marc A. Lepain. When one approaches Dante, it helps to realize that he wrote *The Comedy*, not the *Divine Comedy* (a title that did not become common until more than two hundred years after Dante's death).

I remember being taught it was a comedy because the Christian worldview is incompatible with tragedy. But Fortin shows that the *The Comedy* is also richly comic: Its author does not always shy away from ridiculing those he portrays, and he is a prankster who horses around even to the extent of inserting his own name into the text in cryptographic fashion.

One does not, to be sure, turn to *The Comedy* for a million laughs. In *Dissent and Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, Fortin regards Dante as a philosopher and poet-philosopher, a towering figure concerned with the whole of things, who conceals and reveals his thought in beguiling sonorities. A work of genius is "in the final analysis inexhaustible," but a key to many of its mysteries can be found by concentrating on the political import of Dante's work. Dante is a political philosopher not only because he thinks deeply about problems like the inevitable tensions between spiritual and temporal powers, but because he adopts a politic mode of accommodating his thought to the opinions of his society even while remaining faithful to that thought. He writes "between the lines," esoterically.

This mode of accommodation was perfected in the world of Islam by Al-Farabi and in the Jewish world by Maimonides. Their task can be said to have been to keep philosophy and law out of each other's hair. In the case of Christianity, the task is more complex because one has to mediate primarily between philosophy and *faith*; Christianity was more inextricably linked to philosophy than the other two revealed religions. Dante thus had his work cut out for him. He succeeded spectacularly, though before veneration of his text replaced critical readings of it, he was often enough suspected to have given his heart to philosophy rather than faith. (The way to voice that suspicion used to be to accuse him of Averroism.)

Dante was no stranger to the day-to-day problems of Italian politics. Indeed, he wrote not only *The Comedy* but *De Monarchia*, "a fervent plea for the autonomy of the Roman Emperor in the temporal domain." In a chapter tellingly entitled "The Imperialism of the *Comedy*," Fortin conclusively shows, against much current scholarship, that this is

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also the view of *The Comedy*. Dante's substantive political philosophy owes much more to Aristotle than to Christian theology. By tracing the degeneracy of the Italian politics of his time to bad government rather than original sin, Dante brings to mind not the Church fathers but Machiavelli, another son of Florence, who surely knew his Dante.

In the book's most tantalizing chapter, on "Dante and Christianity," Fortin leads one to raise the fascinating question of Dante's faith. Dante's boldness has always been acknowledged, but, as Harvey Mansfield has observed in a different context, "A man who seems bold can be bolder than he seems."

Fortin's speculation is so daring that it includes the far-out "hypothetical case of a pagan who would have thought of writing a Christian epic." He does not say that Dante was that man, and he gives full weight to the argument that "the poet of the beatific vision could be nothing but a Christian." Could it be that just as Dante has reached a peak where the ancient quarrel between philosophy and poetry ceases to have any relevance, he has also reached a peak where the distinction between faith and reason ceases to apply? I do not know.

One lays down Fortin's fine book on Dante (my paltry attempt at a summary scarcely does justice to its riches and omits, for instance, any mention of the brilliant discussion of Dante's use of allegory), and one is left to wonder not only about Dante's faith but about Fortin's.

Fortin was a Straussian—which means, among other things, that he took "Jerusalem and Athens" as one of the themes of his work, and that no possibility of a synthesis exists. Well, then, which side was he on? Fortin thought of the argument between faith and reason as a standoff, and of the tension between Jerusalem and Athens as being a fruitful source of Western civilization's extraordinary vitality. Affirming the tension, and embodying it, he would seem to be on both sides. Alas, that tempting answer to the question raises further questions. If one internalizes the tension between faith and reason, then what happens to the Christian ideal of peace of soul? I am not sure, but I surmise that on the deepest level, in the last analysis, Ernest Fortin was a practicing and believing Christian, a man of faith. The man of reason doubts what he can and believes what he must. The man of faith believes what he can and doubts what he must. The gap between them is as deep as it is narrow.

In our time, however, when faith is likely to be much less than St. Paul's "substance of things hoped for and the evidence for things not seen," and when reason is likely to be much less than Socrates' quest for wisdom, the genuine man of faith and the genuine man of reason are strong allies. When the barbarians and the philistines are together at the gate, all men of good will can view the life of Father Ernest Fortin among us as a blessing and a cause for celebration. ♦

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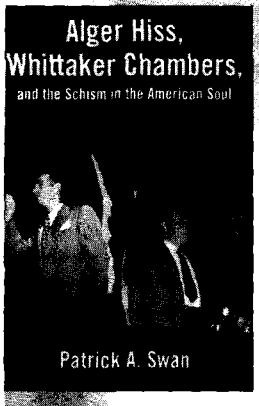

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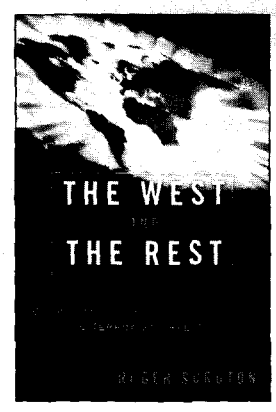

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Iraq: The Critics, Then and Now

Robert Zelnick is a research fellow at the Hoover Institution and chairman of the Department of Journalism at Boston University.

Eleven years ago, forty-five Senate Democrats and two Republicans voted against granting President George H. W. Bush authority to wage war against Iraq. For months, as Iraq cemented its stranglehold on Kuwait, witnesses before Senator Sam Nunn's Armed Services Committee had urged caution. Engage Iraq's desert-bred, battle-tested army, and the United States would suffer twenty thousand casualties or more. The "Arab street" would froth over with anti-American vitriol. Israel would get drawn into the conflict, and the alliance would come apart. Better to let the embargo bring Saddam to his knees. Time rewards the patient.

Had that advice convinced four more senators—assuming the president decided to avert a constitutional crisis and comply—Iraq would today dominate the Persian Gulf. Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and the other gulf states would be mere vassals; Kuwait, a wholly owned subsidiary. Iraq's arsenal would include nuclear weapons. The threat of a terrorist-inspired catastrophe dwarfing September 11 would be terribly real.

That the critics were wrong a decade ago does not automatically make them wrong today. But their arguments are hauntingly similar.

Those who demand proof that Saddam's threat is real would not see it if it bit them. Weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) have been central to Iraqi military doctrine since the mid-1970s. Saddam lied to UN inspectors about his nuclear, chemical, and biological programs and then kicked them out when their trail got hot. As the Intelligence Committee recently noted, hundreds of tons of chemical agents and thousands of tons of precursor chemicals were unaccounted for when the inspectors left in 1998. What did Saddam do with those materials, eat them?

The same critics, who see no imminent threat from Iraq's WMDs, purport to see a Stalingrad-type threat from its shrunken, suspect army. Now the Republican Guards have a new tactic, urban warfare: Street to street they will fight to save Saddam. Pure nonsense. Serbia and Afghanistan proved the lethality of the U.S. arsenal of precision weapons. Further, if the U.S. military has paid a fraction of the attention to information warfare its literature suggests, every Iraqi soldier will know before the battle begins that the only threat to his safety and that of his loved ones is Saddam Hussein. **Fight for him and die. Get rid of him and the war is over. My guess: Saddam will be out faster than a marine on liberty.**

We hear other arguments. Saddam need not be preempted; he can be deterred. Or we must not act without Security Council approval. As for deterrence, it might possibly work, assuming Saddam correctly (for once) interprets U.S. intentions, and assuming further he chooses not to deliver his WMDs through clandestine agents who may be hard to trace.

As for Security Council approval, it would be nice to have the Russians, Chinese, and French endorse U.S. action. Almost as nice as it will be to see democracy begin to transform the Arab world, as those who cherish freedom fervently hope.

— Robert Zelnick

Paid for by the Hoover Institution, Stanford University

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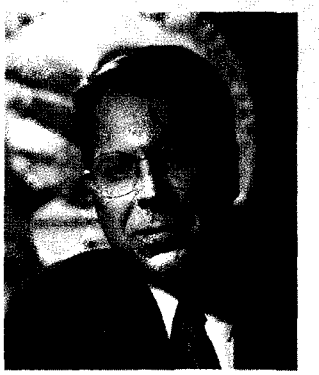

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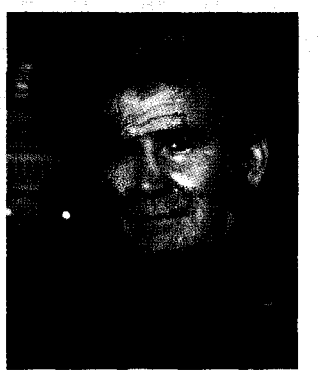

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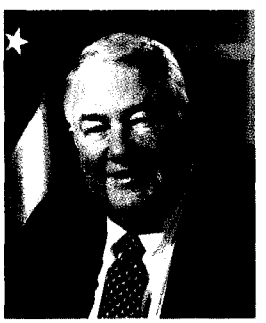

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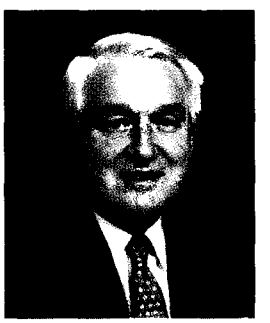

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